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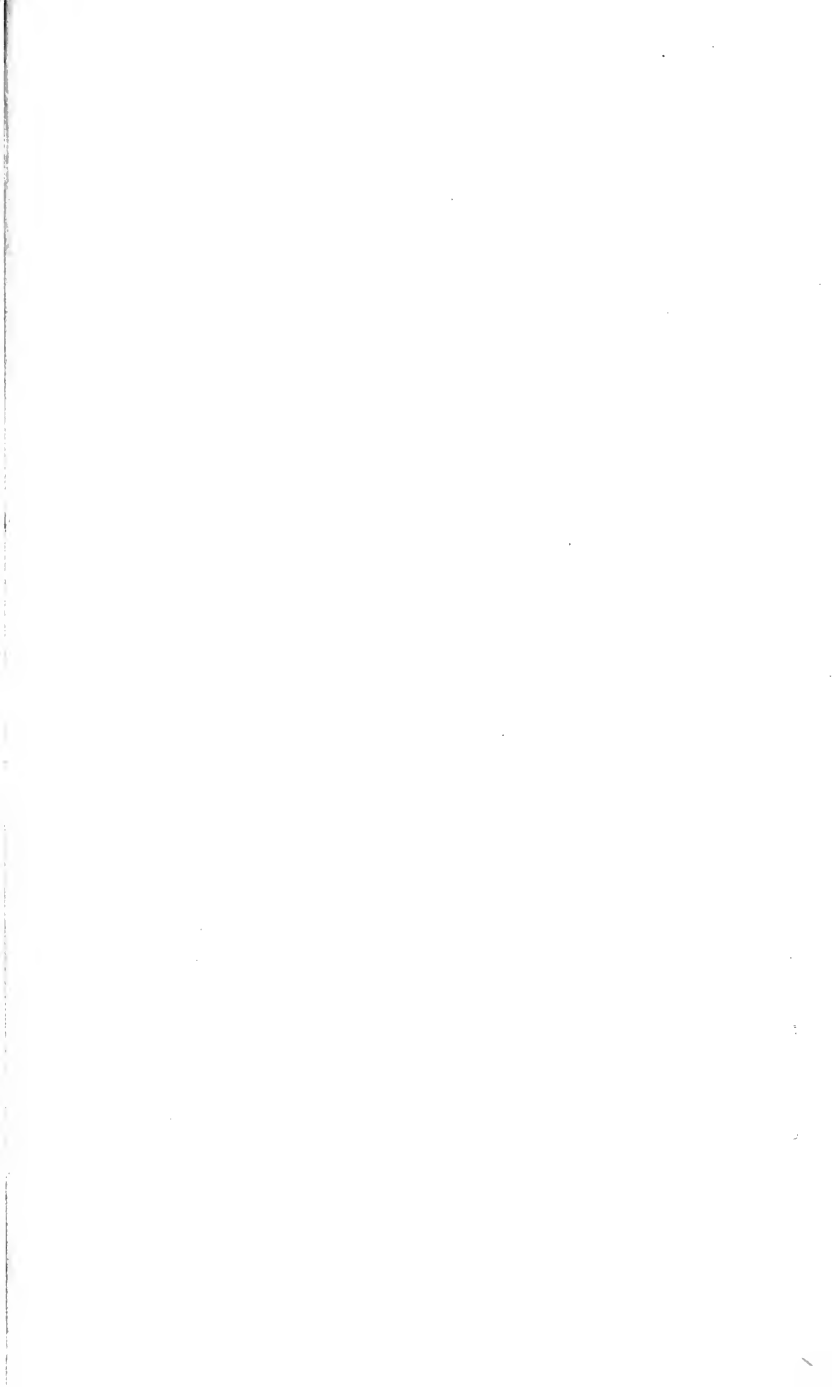
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VOL. II.

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THE BRIDAL BAR.

CHAPTER I.

A DEPARTURE AND WELCOME.

THERE had been so many objections to overrule before Julia and Mary could be brought to assent to the scheme which Claude had devised, that, even after he had succeeded in persuading them to aid him in carrying it out, he was a little apprehensive of the first meeting with Maguire at the Copse. His sister and cousin started with him in anything but a favourable mood. Julia was especially

annoyed at the moral aspects of this league against her uncle, and Mary was ill-tempered because it was part of a plot in which she was to be deprived for so long a time of her Claude's society. All sorts of scruples on the score of morals and maiden delicacy had been urged by the one as they walked along to the rendezvous, and poutings and short petulant answers met him when Claude turned to speak to the other. They neither of them wished to meet Maguire, and it was purely a stretch of imagination on the part of Claude when he said that the ladies were dying to make his acquaintance. But the arch-conspirator had carried off the interview so admirably for his purpose, and had made business so subordinate to pleasure that the remembrance of yesterday, to both Julia and Mary, was that of a delightful rencontre with one of the most agreeable young men it had been their lot to meet. All the rest of the day, when alone with Claude, they could talk of

nothing but Mr. Maguire, and while Mary descanted on the wonderful skill of the artist, Julia, who had been complimented in so marked a manner by the offer of the picture, could not say too much in commendation of the artist himself. It was such a pity, they both agreed, that he could not come openly to the house as Claude's intimate, personal friend; and it did look so inhospitable to allow him to go to the Drum. But they would do all they could, by little attentions, to let him see that they felt the annoyance of this circumstance, and he certainly should be made as comfortable as possible.

All, therefore, this morning, looked forward with pleasure to their walk to the Copse, and started half an hour earlier. Mr. Threlfall quite approved of early morning walks as the sun was not so hot, and Julia had picked one of the finest bunches of black Hambro' grapes from the house, and had selected a few of the finest peaches, which she carefully de-

posited in her little fruit basket, and left it in the garden, as she intended to pass out the back way that morning, and join her cousin and brother in the road. Claude said nothing, though he smiled to himself at this little *ruse* of his sister, which he could not help contrasting with the stern conscientiousness of the preceding morning. He would not rally her on it for the world, for he might mar what he considered a shade of improvement in Julia. On the contrary he applauded her thoughtfulness, and suggested that she should separate a small bunch of the grapes for the artist's present use, and request him to take the basket with its contents home with him.

It was remarkable how full of spirits Julia was this morning.

There sat Maguire, as on the preceding morning, painting away as if he had not removed from the spot since. As they drew near he descried them, and in his hurry to meet, knocked off his hat with his umbrella,

beneath which he had been sitting for shade, and knocked over his umbrella and stool. The meeting was most cordial on all sides, and after Julia had presented her basket of fruit, with the little bunch of grapes for present refreshment, which were accepted with many thanks, at a summons from Claude, who was looking at the picture, all gathered round to see what progress had been made.

“By Jove!” cried Claude, “the little dell will be an elfin spot! What delicious green slopes! And we are to be the gems in that splendid setting. Watteau himself couldn’t have imagined anything more lusciously beautiful. And if he isn’t going to make portraits of us all! Look here, Julie, Morey has been working at your face; I see the likeness already. He’s wonderfully quick at catching expression. Well, that painting will be a gem. Morey,” he exclaimed, with rapture, “you’re a devilish clever fellow.”

“I didn’t wish any of you to see it till it

was done. Now then, down in the hollow again and get into position. Right about face! March!"

And so saying he linked Julia's arm in his, and ran down with her into the little dell, jumping over the low brushwood in his way, she keeping pace with him and jumping too.

Claude and Mary followed in the same style, and again Morey created much amusement by his extreme particularity in posturing his subjects and disposing the folds of the ladies' dresses, which somehow for a long time he could not arrange to his satisfaction. Both the ladies had small, pretty feet, and the artist would insist on seeing both pairs. Julia seemed most obstinate, and claimed most of his artistic attention. He was quite sure, as he drew back to contemplate the living picture, that Miss Julia had moved from her position, and he was obliged to handle her again and again. Then, when all seemed right, he came back because he could only see one of her feet, one of

which he vowed she had drawn up under her dress, though she stoutly denied it, and the other was not exactly as he had left it. In the particularity of his professional exactness he took hold of both her feet, and insisted on their being precisely as he placed them, and once more arranging her dress, he retired to resume his work.

“Claude, now just keep still a little while I get your expression ; I had better make sure of you while I’ve got you. None of you move, but talk away as much as you like.”

“I say, Mr. Maguire,” called out Mary, “need Julie and I keep in this fixed posture if you are working at Claude ?”

“Certainly not, you may both move a little. I’ll come and put you right again.”

Both the ladies laughed at this reply, after the immense trouble the artist had taken in disposing them both to his satisfaction.

“I shan’t be long over Claude, I know every feature in his face, and will soon have his ex-

pression. Move if you like, I'll put you both right again."

Claude was not long in being disposed of, and again the artist went through the laborious task of putting the ladies right. Julia, as before, seemed to be the more intractable of the two, and required a great deal of arranging and rearranging.

Thus the second morning and the three succeeding mornings passed, the picture showing fair progress, but by no means rapid advancement, as the artist required a great many sittings, and occupied a considerable time in posing his figures.

Claude had delayed his departure to the last moment, but a letter had come from Mr. Hawley Paget to Mr. Threlfall to say that, if quite agreeable and convenient, he would give himself the pleasure of spending a few days at the Grange, when he hoped to make the acquaintance of Mr. Claude Threlfall. Mr. Paget was expected the next day, and as

Claude said he had already exceeded his time, and ought to have been on circuit at that moment, he could not stay another day, not even for the pleasure of meeting Hawley. It certainly was, he said to his uncle, singularly unfortunate that he and Hawley constantly missed one another, but he must postpone pleasure to professional duties, and he begged his uncle to assure Hawley what satisfaction it would give him to make his acquaintance at some future time.

Uncle Threlfall was too much gratified with his nephew's professional zeal to offer any objection to his leaving home at once, and undertook to make it all right with Hawley Paget. Claude, therefore, amidst many regrets of Mary and Julia, abruptly terminated his vacation, and started off in his uncle's carriage for Dover, calling on Morey to bid him farewell on his way thither.

As the carriage was driving up to the station, Claude caught sight of Mr. Paget's

carriage standing there, and, not wishing to encounter the owner, he went very cautiously into the station, obtained his ticket, and, having given orders about his luggage, took his seat in the train. It was fortunate that he had done so, and used the despatch he had, for he was hardly in his compartment before two gentlemen passed along the platform in company with a railway porter, whom they were interrogating about some matter which seemed to give the younger gentleman of the two very great concern. Claude instantly recognised Mr. Paget, and, closely scrutinising the other, discovered in him the person of Hawley, whom he did not at first know, having only once seen his face as he lay in bed at the Drum, and then with his eyes closed in sleep. He looked well at him several times, as he passed up and down the platform, to familiarize himself with his countenance and personal appearance, and had the satisfaction, for his confirmation, to hear Mr. Paget fre-

quently address him as Hawley in the earnestness of their talk about a missing portmanteau. The train was now in motion, and Claude, congratulating himself in having once more avoided Mr. Hawley Paget, was on his way to London to proceed on circuit, via Italy.

After Claude had taken farewell of his friend at the Drum, Maguire started for the old rendezvous at the Copse. It had been arranged as before that they were all to meet that morning for the purpose of proceeding with the picture. The departure of Claude was so sudden—he not having heard from his uncle till his return home to lunch on the preceding day that Hawley Paget's visit was so imminent—that Maguire, after Claude's early call on his way to Dover, hardly knew whether to expect the ladies that morning or not. However, he would keep the appointment, and indulged the hope that Miss Julia and her cousin would favour him with the sitting.

Accordingly he was at the place of meeting,

seated on his stool, and painting in the drapery of his figures, and, to his joy, heard the voices of the two ladies before they were within view. They were expecting a visitor that morning, and, not knowing how soon he might arrive, had agreed to start off a little before the time in order to keep their appointment.

“Mr. Maguire,” Julia had said, “would be very much disappointed if they did not meet him as they had agreed to do;” and Mary had said that now Claude had gone it was very dull at home, and Mr. Maguire was such a cheerful companion. “Besides, you know, Julie,” she added, “the picture must be finished, and he can’t get on at all without us.”

For these valid reasons both the ladies had set out for the Copse, and arrived there just a quarter of an hour before the time. Maguire was rejoiced to see them, and made up for Claude’s absence by an increased exuberance

of spirits in the cordiality and frolicsomeness of the welcome he gave them. Of course, after such an event as the departure of the conspirator in chief, it was hardly possible to sit down quietly to work. Maguire had made up his mind not to do much, if any, work this morning, and—as Julia had brought more grapes from the vinery and more peaches from the walls, which she had gathered with her own hands, and, in company with her cousin, had gone out through the back garden gate—they all sat down under the shade of some neighbouring trees which skirted the high road, and made a delightful little picnic party.

“We are so sorry,” began Mary, “that Claude has gone off in this frisk; we shall be so dull without him.”

Maguire was determined that so far as lay in him they shouldn't be at all dull, at all events at the rendezvous; so he got up the steam, which, indeed, was very rarely down,

and soon, by his facetious humour, made everything as jovial and pleasant as possible.

“You see it is very awkward, Mr. Maguire,” said Mary, “for we are expecting a visitor this morning who has written to say that he is coming to the Grange particularly with the desire of making Claude’s acquaintance.”

Mary laid a stress on the word “particularly,” and cast a side glance of humour at her cousin.

“Coming over to see Claude, eh ! ‘ particularly ’ ”—and here Maguire repeated the emphasis on the word, but with a humorous glance at Mary herself as if he knew all about it—“particularly,” he repeated, “to make Claude’s acquaintance ?”

Mary laughed at this very significant taking up of her words, thinking that she quite understood the fun in Mr. Maguire’s mind, and that he was in the secret of Hawley’s engagement to her cousin. But, of course, Mr.

Maguire's delicate fun was pointed at Mary herself, for had he not been assured on the very best authority—that of the landlady of the Drum—that Mary Threlfall was the affianced of Mr. Hawley Paget, who, in the passionate ardour of his devotion, had essayed a feat which had well-nigh cost him his life? Mary's hearty laughter convinced Maguire that the landlady was right, and from that moment he treated her, amidst all their jocularity, with the delicacy due to an engaged lady. With Julia he was much more free, and her repeated attentions to him, in the matter of the delicious fruit, convinced him that all the other attentions at the inn, which had been continued ever since, were attributable more particularly to her. He amused them with a lot of racy anecdotes of town life within his own more special experience; gave them, in answer to inquiries, a lot of interesting information about the Academy—the professors and students there, and talked in his usual

voluble and admiring style of the remarkable abilities of his friend Claude, whose name, he said, would go down to posterity with that of Reynolds, Gainsborough, Etty, Turner, and all the other great masters of the English school of painting. He verily believed that Claude would eventually rival Reynolds in the intellectuality of his portraits and the grandeur of his colouring, and would surpass him as an historical painter. He became glowingly eloquent on the splendid future for his friend, and said it was a thousand pities,—that it was a sin, to throw any obstacles in the way of such a man, who was born an artist, and could not, in the nature of things, be anything else but an artist.

“This ought to reconcile you, Miss Julia,” he proceeded, “in parting with your brother, and consenting to this little bit of unavoidable and pardonable deception. I hate deception, I hope, as much as any man, but, so convinced am I of the importance of aiding Claude’s

noble ambition in every way that I think I could tell lies and play the hypocrite for him, if necessary, every day of my life."

"Oh! you wicked young man!" exclaimed Mary, laughing at him, and showing by her looks how much she approved of his wickedness, and was delighted with his friendly admiration of, and enthusiasm for, her dear Claude.

Though Julia started at the bold profession of Maguire's friendship for her brother, yet she was more than half convinced by what he had said, that Claude was justified in fulfilling the destiny of his nature, and she now rather lamented the necessity, than chafed in any moral disquiet, for the duplicity in which she had consented to take a part.

Conversation never flagged for one moment, and seasoned as it was with Maguire's irrepressible fun and abundant humour, they were frequently convulsed with laughter. They were all laughing most merrily together when,

all at once, the sound of carriage wheels was heard, and turning their faces towards the high road, which ran a few feet below them, and which they could see partially through the trees by which they were hidden from it, they saw Mr. Threlfall's empty carriage followed closely by another, on the box of which was a portmanteau. The laughter had not subsided, and could not be checked immediately, so that the two carriages were cheered on their way by a merry greeting.

CHAPTER II.

THE DILEMMA OF THE DRUM.

MR. HAWLEY PAGET had come to Walmer a day or two earlier than he had at first arranged, in consequence of Uncle Threlfall informing him by letter that Claude had already arrived at the Grange, and was only intending to remain a few days at home. It was a great disappointment to him to be informed by Mr. Threlfall that Claude had left for London only that very morning, and that the return carriage had preceded his own and had just gone

into the stables. Claude, he said, had waited till the last possible moment, and no less lamented the necessity of his departure without seeing his future brother-in-law. Indeed, so anxious had his nephew been to make Mr. Paget's acquaintance, that he had over-passed his time by a couple of days. It was really very unfortunate, especially as Claude would not be home again for a couple of months at the soonest.

Mr. Paget could, of course, do nothing else than bear philosophically his very great disappointment, and, as the ladies were not at home, and he was rather fatigued with his railway journey and carriage drive, he would await their return in the library.

Mr. Threlfall's library was not an entertaining repository of literature to Mr. Hawley Paget, and he had therefore brought with him two or three volumes of Tacitus, a volume of which he had been perusing on his way from London to the Grange, and had been so ab-

sorbed in it that he had not noticed, when he arrived at Dover, that one of the railway porters, by an act of most inexcusable stupidity, had left his portmanteau on the up platform instead of carrying it out to the carriage; and another, in the hurry of sending off the train, had put it into the luggage van, from which it was fortunately extracted. Having no further dread of a similar mishap, he said he would meet the family at lunch, and withdrew, in company with the Roman historian, to the library.

Mary and Julia returned half an hour before lunch, quite aware that Hawley was in the house, but not presuming to disturb him in his sacred retreat. At the hour of lunch he made his appearance in the dining-room, and accosted both ladies with his usual politeness. A longer retention and extra pressure of the hand of Julia signified the special pleasure with which he greeted her after their long separation from one another.

Mr. Hawley Paget commenced the conversation, as they seated themselves at lunch, with remarks on the magnificence of the weather and its favourable influence on the crops and agriculture generally. Mr. Threlfall having a little land under cultivation, and being what would be called a gentleman farmer on a small scale, entered with interest into the subject of crops, and Mr. Paget, knowing something of agricultural chemistry, talked learnedly on soils and manures. From these subjects it was in strict natural order that draining and fencing should be talked of, and then they got by an easy but by no means accidental transition to agricultural appliances, and the variety of implements was spoken of and the great improvement of the adaptation of steam to the purposes of farming. From this they proceeded to discuss the probable price of corn and foreign imports, and the state of the money market, and the general social condition of the country. All the con-

versation was confined to the two gentlemen, and the two ladies thought it was not at all lively, not nearly so lively as the conversation they had had that morning with Mr. Maguire in the Copse. Mary several times giggled and ogled her cousin in the course of this very methodical but tedious talk, and made several efforts to turn the conversation and attract Mr. Paget's attention to their poor neglected selves. But Mr. Paget never liked any violent wrenches in conversation. His mind had been trained to be logical and consequential, and although he was not at all averse to rhetoric and poetry, he did not at all see the appositeness of Miss Mary's humourous allusions to getting up and blowing off the steam, and the jolly fun of hay-making in the old-fashioned way, which not only benefited the grass but did the amateur haymakers a great deal of good. And then what did Miss Mary mean when she said that she didn't like the steam-threshing machine,

it was so monotonous, and as for the harrow, she positively hated it, crawling and scraping, and wounding all the way it went in its slow drawling progress. She was very much afraid that all these so-called improvements were taking all the fun out of farming, and it was very provoking even if it did pay better.

Notwithstanding the episodes occasioned by Miss Mary's frivolous comments, Mr. Paget's well-trained mind always enabled him to take up the broken thread of the discourse and carefully join it again; and Mary, seeing that their very intellectual visitor was not to be effectually diverted, and that with every interruption he warmed more with his subject, and betrayed some impatience with her, winked at her cousin with one of her most significant winks, and rose to quit the room, followed by Julia, creating not the least disturbance, as neither gentleman, in the earnestness of their conversation, was apparently aware that they had gone.

“Five minutes with Mr. Maguire,” said Mary, when they were out of the room, “are worth a whole month with Hawley. A whole month!” she repeated, “may I never experience the infliction! What must it be, Julie, to spend a whole—” and she instantly checked herself, as if she thought she was going too far, and might possibly give pain to her cousin.

“We must pack up another little parcel for Thomas to take to the Drum, Polly,” said Julia. “Shall we put in another little ham? The one we sent was very small, and must be nearly all gone by this time.”

A very considerable parcel it was, and took some time in making up, and caused some wry faces in Thomas, who did not at all seem to relish the prospect of carrying it this hot afternoon. They had picked out the prettiest, plumpest little ham that was hanging overhead, took forcible possession of a couple of trussed chickens that were destined for that

day's dinner, popped in, mould and all, a large calves' foot jelly, added a dozen peaches and a couple of bunches of grapes, and, as Mary was butler, and there were she didn't know how many dozens of papa's favourite port, she managed, after immense trouble with the grapes and peaches, to squeeze in a couple of bottles, thick with the dust and cobwebs of years, that the recipient might know, by the most infallible of signs, that it had been bottled for ages. Off the basket was sent, with very particular instructions to the bearer to take care of the contents, and bring back without fail the two small fruit baskets. Thomas shouldered his load, supporting it with one hand, and carrying in the other a bouquet of choice flowers. The bearer had been quite reconciled to his hot task by Mary's slipping into his hand a half-crown.

Thomas had hardly left the house five minutes, and Mary and Julia had gone up to their rooms, when, to the alarm of both ladies,

they saw Mr. Threlfall and his guest pass out together, and in the direction taken by the bearer of their parcel. Thomas was not at all a quick walker at any time, and at the present time his progress would be unavoidably slow.

“If papa and Hawley are going to the Castle they will be sure to overtake that tortoise Thomas,” cried Mary, in alarm, “and then, as Claude says, there’ll be the devil to pay.”

“On with your hat, Polly,” said Julia, assuming her own. “We must go after them, and turn them in another direction or divert them somehow.”

The suggestion was instantly acted on, and the young ladies ran after the two gentlemen, Mary shouting to them to stop, for Thomas, the wretched tortoise, was not only in sight, but had put down his load to rest himself, and was actually sitting on the lid of the basket.

“Where are you going, Hawley?” asked Julia. “As you did not ask us to accompany you, we have invited ourselves.”

“Mr. Threlfall and I were just going on to the shore for the cool sea-breezes, and we intended to call at the Drum on our way. I should like to see the good lady again, to whom I am indebted for her kind attentions to me last winter.”

“The Drum!” gasped Mary, unable to control the sudden feeling of alarm at the idea of Hawley calling at the Drum in company with her papa. Of course, they would overtake that tortoise—confound him for sitting on the basket!—and, of course, they would see Mr. Maguire, and, of course, if they didn’t, they would see that talkative busybody, the landlady, who is always talking about her neighbours’ affairs; and, of course, she would be sure to speak to papa about her guest, and tell him all Mr. Maguire may have said, or may not have said, about the presents

sent from the Grange. "The Drum!" she ejaculated involuntarily, again looking at Julia, who, like herself, looked as if she would faint on the instant at the thought.

"Why the Drum, Hawley?" Julia asked.

"I have just told you, Julia," he replied, provokingly, and in his politest manner. Mr. Hawley Paget did not like to use vain repetitions, they did not indicate a well-disciplined mind, and, as a lawyer, he was sparing of his words, for they would hereafter be money to him as well as what he carried in his purse.

"The Drum!" again said Mary, but with a look of surprise not quite so much dissociated from self-possession as before. "The idea of going to the Drum this hot afternoon! Why we shall all be scorched up—dried up like parchment, and only fit to be made drums of ourselves."

"You need not go, Miss Mary," returned the persistent fiend, for such Mr. Hawley

Paget was at that moment in the eyes of the agitated Polly.

“But we shall go, both of us, I can tell you, if you are going; and as you are so utterly unfeeling as to scorch us up this burning day by going to the Drum, we will both go on before you, and if you don’t find us when you get there look up at the sign over the door, and you’ll see us nothing but parchment nailed one piece on each side of the Drum itself. Come along, Julie!” and off the young ladies scampered as if they were resolved to be turned into parchment as quickly as possible.

“I can’t run, Hawley,” said Mr. Threlfall, laughing at his daughter; “you can. Be off after them, and I’ll soon be with you.”

But Mr. Hawley Paget declined, as he had not quite recovered from his fatigue, and the weather was very hot; moreover, Miss Mary was much too boisterous and full of absurd

nonsense for him, and he had no wish to rejoin her.

So the ladies hurried on, and were, of course, very hot indeed ; the perspiration was running down their faces, which were fiery red with the exertion. The tortoise was overtaken before he reached his destination, and just as he was putting down his load for another rest. Mary seized the bouquet, and Julia made as if she were going to seize the basket, but Thomas could not allow that, and again put it on his shoulder, following the ladies at his quickest possible pace in order to keep at all up with them.

“There put it down here, Thomas,” said his mistress, “and be sure you don’t go back by the road. Mind what I say. I particularly wish you not to go back by the road. You know your way across the fields : turn to the left when you leave here, not to the right mind !” and she saw her man out at the door,

and made sure that he had obeyed her instructions.

“Mrs. Davis !” she shouted, as the landlady was not in the bar, “Mrs. Davis! where are you? Oh ! here you are,” as the landlady came down a staircase. “One word with you in your private parlour. We’re in a great hurry.”

“Why, bless my soul, how burning hot you both are, ladies ! Do sit down and cool yourselves,” showing them into a room. “Now take off your hats and undo something ; there’s no draughts here, and you won’t catch cold.”

“Is Mr. Maguire here?” gasped Julia, scarcely able to speak for shortness of breath.

“Do you mean, is he in at this moment, miss ?”

“Yes.”

“No, miss, he is not ; he said he would dine at five to-day, and is gone to have a bathe.”

“Papa and Mr. Paget,” said Mary, “are coming on here. You know Mr. Paget, he nearly died here in the snow, you know—the hot water bath—you and he—you remember—in bed here. He’s coming to thank you and all that. Don’t speak about Mr. Maguire, they don’t know Mr. Maguire—nothing about what comes here from the Drum—I mean the Grange—hams, fruit, all that. You understand, don’t you?”

Mary spoke in such a flurry and with so many snatches at breath which would not come in sufficient quantity, that Mrs. Davis sat staring at her quite unable to understand the meaning of her strangely disjointed and incoherent speech.

“Don’t you understand, Mrs. Davis?” struck in Julia; “we have very particular reasons for wishing to keep Mr. Maguire’s visit to the Drum a secret.”

“Oh! very good, miss. I quite understand. You may trust me to keep a secret.”

“They’ll be here presently,” said Mary, recovering breath a little; “papa and Hawley—Mr. Paget, you know. Don’t say a word about Mr. Maguire to them; nothing about the presents. You promise me you won’t, Mrs. Davis? There’s a reason for secrecy interesting to no one but Mr. Maguire and us two.”

“You may trust me, miss.”

“I knew we might trust you, Mrs. Davis,” said Mary, flatteringly. “I daresay you have had your little secrets in your time, Mrs. Davis?”

The landlady smiled, and said something about her young days, and dear Davis who was now no more.

“Is papa coming?” asked Mary, hurrying to the window, and looking along the road. “No, they are not yet in sight. I’ll go and see. Wait here, Julie, till I come back.”

Mary went up the road and turned the corner, where she could look a long way to-

wards the Grange; but there was nothing to be seen either of her papa or Hawley. Where had they got to? They must have come that way, for they had passed the stile across the fields before she had overtaken them. Had they turned back? Not at all unlikely, just for a joke; one of papa's jokes to disappoint them, and let them go home alone. She was not at all angry at the joke, but quite enjoyed it as much and perhaps more than papa did; but wouldn't she rate him for it when they got back! She hastened back to the Drum with the good news, and took advantage of the leisure afforded to patch up a tale—Julia had been also telling a bungling sort of tale in her absence—so that Mrs. Davis might not suppose there was anything very improper in the affair. Her great eagerness to assure the landlady of the perfect moral decorum of the proceeding, and the absolute necessity of secrecy, just for the present, confirmed Mrs. Davis's suspicions that it was a love affair,

though neither of the young ladies would say as much. The case was very clear to Mrs. Davis, very clear indeed ! Miss Mary was already engaged, she knew, to Mr. Paget, and this Mr. Maguire, who was Mr. Claude's intimate friend, was, of course, the lover of Miss Julia.

Mrs. Davis assured her visitors that she would be very discreet, and the two ladies, immensely relieved, and now pleasantly cool, took their departure.

CHAPTER III.

MARY THRELFALL SAYS WHAT COMES UPPERMOST.

AFTER dinner Mary did not forget to take the two gentlemen to task for their conduct in not following them to the Drum, and returning home with them. She affected to rate them soundly, after the heat and fatigue they had endured, so that Mr. Hawley Paget could not do otherwise than offer an explanation, coupled with a sort of apology, as he could not conscientiously allow Mr. Threlfall to bear

the weight of the blame; and it somewhat jarred with his sense of what was dignified to be supposed to have so far descended as to have joined Mr. Threlfall in anything so ridiculous as a practical joke.

“The blame, if there be any, Miss Mary,” he replied, “is properly mine. Your papa would have gone forward, as we proposed doing, but I suggested, as the heat certainly was very oppressive, that we should go in an opposite direction, and avail ourselves of the friendly shade of some trees.”

“Yes, that was it, Polly,” chimed in her father, “that was it. Hawley was hot, so was I, and we were not going to run after you two mad caps; so we turned away towards the Copse—you know the Copse—and there we sat down and passed a very pleasant afternoon.”

The ladies exchanged glances, and each could read the other's thoughts at the mention of the Copse—their own little private ren-

devious. Both remained silent after this, leaving the gentlemen to talk together.

“The Drum and the Copse,” said Julia to herself, “both, too, in one and the same afternoon !”

Mary was saying something similar to herself, without a doubt ; but, like a genuine conspirator, she was preparing for practical action, and thinking what had better be done. They mustn’t meet at the Copse any more, at least while Hawley was at the Grange. And yet why not ? They always met in the morning, and Hawley invariably devoted the morning to reading in the library. Yes, they would keep to the Copse, it was a quiet little nook, nicely shaded on one side, and they could hardly find a better place.

Julia was almost startled from her reverie by the voice of her lover addressing her ; he had hitherto said so little to her personally.

“I was so fortunate, Julia, as to meet with

a copy of Longinus soon after I returned to town."

"Indeed, Hawley."

"I intend to give this vacation to re-reading Tacitus. I admire that great Roman historian. Few men were more profound observers of human character. In the true Baconian method he studied minutely all the phenomena of human conduct, and thus penetrated to the profoundest recesses of the human heart. His conclusions are most carefully arrived at, and are generally just. He was a man of most elevated thought, and of great moral dignity. His works differ in value and interest. I am one of those who are inclined to think that he drew somewhat on his imagination, or relied too much on hearsay testimony, in his work on the manners of the Germans. On some other occasion I will give you my reasons for thinking as I do. I know other persons have a different opinion,

and can say much in support of it. His work called the 'Annals'—it is unfortunately but a fragment—was his most important work. I wish you were a Latin reader, Julia, because, with your strong dramatic taste, you would be pleased with Tacitus."

"No doubt I should, Hawley."

Again Mr. Paget addressed himself to his host, after briefly replying to Mary, who knew enough Latin to ask the question whether Tacitus was a great farmer.

"A great farmer!" echoed Mr. Paget, with a look of surprise. "Why a great farmer, Miss Mary? He was a great historian."

"He wrote a book called 'Agricola,' didn't he? Agricola means a farmer, doesn't it?"

Mr. Paget smiled, and politely assured Miss Mary that Agricola was a proper name there, and that the work she alluded to was not on agriculture, but was a biography.

Miss Mary thanked Mr. Paget for his politeness, and rising from table, led the way out of

the room, Julia being quite ready to follow, as she could not talk at all with Hawley about Tacitus.

“I do feel so tired, Julie, don’t you?” said Mary, as they sat down together in the drawing-room. “What with the excitement of our afternoon’s adventure, and the heavy dullness of Hawley’s learned talk this evening, I’m quite done up.”

“So am I,” was the reply.

“You must allow, Julie dear, that Hawley is very prosy and dull.”

“He certainly is very fatiguing.”

“I think him very fatiguing—quite a bore.”

“I wish he were a little livelier.”

“Of course you do, dear; a heavy man is a horrible dead weight on a woman’s life. What a contrast he is to Mr. Maguire, isn’t he?”

“They are not at all alike.”

“Indeed, they are not. One can’t help

liking Morey, as Claude calls him ; but really, Hawley is intolerable."

Mary was so thoroughly wearied with Hawley's learned prosiness, and even disgusted with his polite stiffness and undemonstrativeness as her cousin's lover, that she was in the mood to say what was scarcely consistent with the relations in which Julia stood to that very upright and gentlemanly young man. She had observed, too, the special attentions, in a variety of little particulars, which Morey paid to her cousin, and was quite satisfied, in her own mind, that he was more than half in love with her. And she thought she detected in Julie a secret pleasure in these very marked attentions. Certainly, Julie was always as pleased as she when the time for the rendezvous came, and she was always so very thoughtful about the fruit, and took such pleasure in packing the basket of delicacies. Julia liked Mr. Maguire, she was quite sure, and if she could do any-

thing to help on the affair, that she certainly would, for Morey would be a much nicer beau for Julie than that cold, formal, pedantic Hawley.

“I say, Julie, weren’t you surprised they didn’t come after us to the Drum?”

“I was, indeed; but I was very glad they didn’t.”

“So was I; but if it had been Mr. Maguire instead of Hawley, don’t you think he would have run after us?”

Julia laughed and said—

“He certainly would, and would have caught us, too.”

“And why didn’t Hawley run after us?”

“He said he was hot.”

“And weren’t we hot? I wish he were hotter; he’s not half hot enough for me. Only think, he your lover and turning off in another direction! Why, he’s been reading Tacitus all the morning, and spending the whole afternoon with papa in the Copse; and

now there he is prosing away with papa over his wine, and then he'll come in here and begin again over the tea-table. I wish Morey were here instead of him ; we should enjoy a little more of his company and have some fun."

"Don't say anything to vex him, Polly, when they come in to tea."

"Not I ; he hardly deigns to talk to me. Did you see his half contemptuous smile when he was putting me right about Agricola ?"

"But you were poking fun at him, and he half suspected that you were."

"Indeed, I wasn't. I really had forgotten for the moment that Agricola was a man's name ; I recollected it afterwards. He had been talking so much about farming, and the word Agricola popped into my mind and out it came, stupid as it was."

"I say, Polly, we shall have to tell Mr. Maguire to-morrow all about our scare this afternoon, and must talk the matter over as

to what had better be done. We must meet somewhere else than the Copse."

"No; I've thought all about that. Hawley, you know, is in the library with his Tacitus, or some other learned book, all the morning. We needn't change our place of meeting."

"I'm very vexed we had to tell Mrs. Davis that Mr. Maguire was here on the sly, she will wonder what it's all about, won't she?"

"Very likely, but she'll find it too deep even for her cunning."

"I wonder what she thinks?"

"A love affair, of course."

"Oh! Polly."

"What of that? She thinks Mr. Maguire is after you or me. I don't care; do you? Next to Claude I should be delighted with such a lover as Morey, and as for Hawley—well, I won't say what I was going to let slip."

"But you know, Mary, Mrs. Davis is such a talker."

“I know it; but all she can say is that a gentleman at her house is in love with a young lady in the neighbourhood, and is staying there on the sly.”

“But how disagreeable, especially if she should let out who the lady is.”

“She doesn’t know, and how can she?”

“I wish she wouldn’t talk so much as she does about what don’t concern her. If she should say that the lady is one of us, won’t it be disagreeable?”

“Not at all disagreeable, I rather enjoy it. Look here, Julie, these little sly love matters everybody knows are common enough, and then it will put anybody, who may be curious about it, off the scent about Claude’s little affair. I don’t care what people may say about a gentleman coming down here on the sly after me, especially such a nice gentleman as Mr. Morey Maguire, do you?”

“Well, it’s rather awkward, and not altogether pleasant.”

Mr. Threlfall and his guest at that moment entered the room, and stopped any further tête-à-tête between the two ladies. Mary was not in the least disposed this evening to trouble herself any further with Mr. Hawley Paget. It did not seem to concern her at all now whether he was cold or hot, his temperature was quite beneath her consideration. She fancied, too, that her cousin was almost as indifferent as herself on the point, and therefore she never once put in a word during the conversation, or rather the monologue with which Mr. Paget entertained them. And, even if she had been so disposed, not one single opportunity was afforded her, for the speaker discoursed much too learnedly for her, as, addressing himself wholly to Julia, he favoured her with his reasons for thinking that the Germany of Tacitus was much too imaginative to be accepted as strictly historical.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. HAWLEY PAGET THINKS IT VERY STRANGE !
VERY STRANGE, INDEED !

THE meeting at the Copse was the great event of each succeeding day, and the delicious *bonne bouche* of each young lady's daily existence. It would have been difficult to say—regarding all that each said and did with the penetrating and discriminating faculties of Tacitus himself—which enjoyed these assignations the more, and was more anxious to carry on the plot with perfect secrecy. The usual

preparations were made this morning, the usual slipping out at the back-way with the well-furnished little basket of uncle Threlfall's grapes and peaches, and Mary observed a more than usual attention was paid by Julia to her personal appearance. They had a great deal to communicate this morning to Mr. Maguire, and consequently the artist was under the necessity of laying by his painting, and extending himself on the grassy sward in the pretty little dell which, with some liberty of imagination, he had been depicting. The conversation between these three conspirators was necessarily earnest and absorbing, but no feeling of alarm agitated the bosom of any of them, as they were perfectly secure from Mr. Threlfall's guest, and he was the only person about whom they felt any concern.

Maguire laughed heartily at the story of the dilemma in which his colleagues were placed yesterday, and commended the adroit-

ness of the *ruse* by which they had outstripped the two gentlemen and anticipated their visit to the Drum.

“But,” said Maguire, with a grave face, “Mrs. Davis is a very communicative woman, and not over favoured with the virtue of discretion. What did you say to her in explanation of your anxiety that I should be kept *incog.*?”

“Upon my word I don’t know what I said,” replied Mary, “I was so dreadfully flurried, and I don’t know what Julie said, but, of course, we said nothing about the real reason why you are down here. What did you say, Julie?”

“Indeed I don’t know; I was very much flurried too.”

“Mrs. Davis,” said Maguire, “will be sure to put this and that together in her natural inquisitiveness.”

“Well, if she could put this and that

together," said Mary, "that I spoke in my fright she will be a very clever woman indeed. She'll make up her mind it's a love affair, you know."

All laughed at this opinion of the astute Mary, and Morey said he thought it would help to preserve their special secret if they kept up the illusion.

Again both the ladies laughed at Morey's merry conceit, and Julia slightly blushed.

"Yes," said Morey, "not a bad idea. These things are common enough, you know. If Mrs. Davis makes any significant suggestions to me, as she certainly will, by Titian! she will!—she won't be able to keep her secret to herself—I'll confess that I'm in love, a lover on the sly. I shall enjoy the fun. But which of you is to be my flame? We must settle that, you know."

"Oh! Julie, to be sure!" returned Mary, promptly. "I'm engaged. You must be in

love with Julie," she added again, laughing merrily, "and mind you play your lover's part properly."

Julia could not keep down her blushes, but, of course, she could not make a serious matter of a mere bit of fun, which was necessary, too, to the concealment of the real plot. So she tried to look as if she quite understood it to be merely a joke, and joined in her cousin's merry mood.

Morey Maguire laughed as heartily as either, but he blushed also, and both Mary and Julia observed this. Morey was quite in the mood to begin the joke at once, and really did begin his lover's part with so much histrionic cleverness that it looked quite as if it were all in earnest.

We must leave the conspirators in the enjoyment of their grapes and peaches and love-making, and the merriment which it all excited, to accompany Mr. Hawley Paget in a morning walk. Yes, this very precise and

studious gentleman had laid down Tacitus this morning soon after the ladies had gone out, and thought he would take him up in the afternoon instead. It was not so warm in the morning, and he must call on Mrs. Davis, at the Drum, to pay his respects to her. There were ample reasons for departing from a rule which, except on very rare occasions, he never allowed himself to infringe.

Mr. Paget arrived at the Drum, and was received by Mrs. Davis with one of her most studied curtseys.

“Really, Mr. Paget,” said the landlady, “I’m quite delighted to see you again, sir; it’s very polite of you to call on me. I hope you’ve quite got over that dreadful accident; you’ve not suffered from rheumatics, I hope, sir? It was a most providential escape, wasn’t it, sir?”

“It certainly was, Mrs. Davis, a most providential escape, and I am greatly indebted to you as the instrument of it. I could not

return to Walmer without doing myself the pleasure of paying my respects to you."

"I hope Mr. Threlfall and the young ladies at the Grange is quite well, sir."

"Thank you ; they are all well, Mrs. Davis. The young ladies are out for their usual early morning walk. I thought I might have met them, but they don't appear to have come in this direction."

"It's prettier and more woodier, sir, turning off rather to the right after leaving the Grange."

"It is ; I found it so yesterday. Mr. Threlfall and I walked in that direction, and found a delightful little valley flanked by well-grown trees, near what he called the Copse."

"Ah ! yes, sir ; that little valley and Copse is very pretty. Strangers don't know the Dingle, or they would choose such a pretty spot for picnics."

"This fine weather, I suppose, you have

seen a fair number of visitors. I hope your house is full, Mrs. Davis."

"Thank you, sir; we have had a few visitors, but our house is small, you see, and they mostly go to the lodgings. I have only one gentleman staying with me at present."

"Only one gentleman, eh?"

"Only one, sir; and a very nice young gentleman he is. You don't happen to know him, sir; he's a Mr. Maguire."

"No, I have not the pleasure of the acquaintance of any gentleman of that name; a tourist, I presume."

"He's a artist, sir, and is going to reside here some time. He goes about painting, and has painted a very pretty picture with Mr. Threlfall's house in it."

"Has he, indeed?"

"He has indeed, sir; he paints beautifully, and that's why I call him a artist. I don't know that he gets his living by painting pic-

tures; p'rhaps he's what you would call a amature."

"Many gentlemen are fond of sketching; it's a delightful employment to such as have the accomplishment."

"It is, sir; but between you and me," and here Mrs. Davis almost whispered in the privacy of her confidence, and repeated her words, "between you and me, sir, I rather think the young gentleman's in love with some young lady hereabouts, but that's not my business, you know, sir; I've got quite enough to do to mind my own business, though p'rhaps I could do a little more. The Drum does a tidyish business, sir, I'm happy to say."

"I am very glad to hear it, Mrs. Davis," and as Mr. Hawley Paget did not seem to invite any further confidences on the part of the landlady, and rather drew himself up when she almost touched his coat sleeve and spoke of something between her and him, she said

no more, and he rose to depart in stately, but polite mien, having paid his respects to the good woman who had been the instrument along with the two men in saving his life.

The warmth of the morning was pleasantly tempered by a gentle westerly breeze, and Mr. Paget was tempted to extend his walk. He had a pocket volume of Homer with him, and he thought he could wile away the time pleasantly in some little shady nook till lunch. He knew little of the surrounding country, but thought he could find the pretty little vale where he had enjoyed the company of his friend on the previous day. Accordingly he turned his steps in that direction.

As he drew near, keeping to the main road all the way, he was suddenly startled by an explosion of laughter close by, and instantly distinguished the ringing sounds of Miss Mary's merriment. But where he then stood was several feet below the spot where she and, of course, Julia, must be then sitting or walk-

ing together, and it was not possible to approach them, by reason of a thick hedge, or even to see them as the trees were closely planted that flanked the road side, and were thick with foliage. He stopped to survey the ground, and find a way of access to them, when another peal of merry laughter greeted him; but now the deeper sounds of a gentleman's risibility were heard, and he thought he had heard the same hearty laughter before, and about the same spot, when he was driving towards the Grange on the day of his arrival. He remembered it well, for his horses as well as himself had been startled by the sounds, and had swerved aside, nearly shaking him from his seat.

However, he thought nothing more of this at that moment, but was intent on finding an opening by which he might get up the rising ground, and was drawing yet nearer when he heard again the gentleman's voice, and pausing to listen whose it could be, as it did not

sound at all like Mr. Threlfall's, another explosion of laughter greeted him, and almost immediately he heard Mary say—

“I do believe, Mr. Maguire, that was meant in earnest. You're in love with my cousin Julie; I lay a wager you are. And I believe Julie likes you, Mr. Maguire.”

Again all joined in their rollicking laughter, and this time Mr. Paget distinguished Julia's tones in it. What could it all mean? Should he go forward and see for himself? It was very strange, unaccountably strange! Mr. Maguire, too; the Mr. Maguire, no doubt, of the Drum. Mrs. Davis had said that Mr. Maguire was in love; that he was staying there to carry on his amour with some lady in the neighbourhood! What had Miss Mary said, too? In love with Julia! Tells this Maguire to his face that Julia likes him! All laugh! Julia laughs! Is it a dream?”

No, it is not a dream; was not the sun shining? Didn't he, Mr. Paget, feel dread-

fully hot? Wasn't the perspiration now streaming down his face? No, it was no dream! What's that?

"Julie, Julie, I'm sure Mr. Maguire means it all. There, don't pretend you're acting, both of you. Tell him, Julie, you do love him in earnest. Kiss her, Morey, do kiss her!"

"Dream!" said Mr. Paget, hardly to himself, but in a half audible exclamation, "no, it's no dream! Strange! Amazingly strange!"

And fearful of being discovered as an eaves-dropper, which was most undignified, he stole away as softly and rapidly as he could. In the perturbation of his mind he had dropped his little volume of Homer, and cautiously went back for it. He found it, and was picking it up, when another shout of laughter greeted him, and the clapping as of a lady's hands. He knew whose hands they were, for he heard Mary say, as she was thus expressing her delight—

“That’s right, Morey; kiss her again, Morey.”

The operation must have been performed, for there was loud laughter again, and in the midst of this jovial merriment, which gradually died on his ear, Mr. Hawley Paget hastened back to the Grange.

CHAPTER V.

THE BY-PLAY OF THE COMEDY.

MR. HAWLEY PAGET'S quite unintentional eavesdropping discovers a state of things inside the little wooded dell not altogether consistent with the state of things as we left it. The original plot we saw clearly enough—now that Mrs. Davis, landlady of the Drum, had been taken into some measure of confidence—was beginning to get complicated, and a sort of by-play was introduced, merely to divert outsiders and afford some little diver-

sion to the conspirators themselves. But we were not quite prepared, any more than Mr. Hawley Paget, for what greeted, or rather shocked our ears. Mr. Morey Maguire must have acted with consummate skill in his *rôle* of the mock lover of Julia, and thus embarrassed that young lady with the verisimilitude of his impersonation, which was taking a very unfair advantage of his part in the comedy ; or Miss Mary must have proved herself a very cunning conspirator, indeed, and had a little private plot of her own which she resolved to carry out in her own way, and which was also unfair on her part to her colleagues in the main plot ; one or other must have been the fact before matters could have come to such a pass as this. There must have been the most rollicking fun, if it really was fun, before Miss Mary could so far forget herself as to call Mr. Maguire Morey, and challenge him to kiss her cousin Julia, a feat which we are morally certain was performed not once

only, but certainly twice, and perhaps more, for didn't we hear the laughter and clapping of hands, and didn't that laughter continue as boisterous as ever, though it became gradually fainter to our hearing as we walked away with Mr. Hawley Paget to the Grange? We cannot lift up the veil of that morning's proceedings any farther, for the simple reason that we were not there, and probably the reader may think he knows quite enough about what was going on, and we had better leave the veil just as we found it.

We neither saw nor heard any more of the two young ladies till lunch time, and then they came into the dining-room and took their seats at table as quietly and naturally as possible, just as they always did, the very images of spotless innocence and maiden loveliness.

Both Mary and Julia were always conscious of a sense of restraint, the latter more particularly, in coming into the presence of Hawley

Paget. He always rose on her entrance at lunch time and bowed politely, making some slight inquiry about how she was, or how she had passed the morning. He did not omit his usual politeness on the present occasion, so far as the rising from his seat and bowing were concerned, but he did not allude to the state of her health, nor say anything about how she had been occupied. He had been pretty well assured by what he had heard that she was quite well, and he knew quite as much as was agreeable as to how the morning had gone with her; and if he had been curious to know more, it was not at all likely that his curiosity would have been gratified.

He was polite, certainly, but his politeness was not nearly so easy and graceful, and his expression of face, which was always thoughtful, was now very grave. The change in his manner was sufficiently marked to attract Mr. Threlfall's observation, who made some

remark to him about the heat of the weather, and suggested claret as a more cooling drink than either ale or stout. He never addressed a single word to either Julia or Mary, and never looked towards them, but carried on his conversation entirely with Mr. Threlfall on the old topic of agriculture, and the steam implements of husbandry. The conversation on his side, to an observant eye, would have been seen to be constrained, though Mr. Threlfall entered again into the subject with all the energy of a very lively interest.

“Are you going, girls?” called out Mr. Threlfall, as his daughter and niece arose from their seats.

“Yes, papa,” replied Mary. “Your conversation is not very interesting to us ; we can amuse ourselves better.”

Mr. Hawley Paget again left his seat to open the door, and bowed the ladies out of the room.

Julia and Mary retired for the afternoon to their own private room.

"How strangely we did go on this morning, Polly," began Julia; "I am almost ashamed of myself."

"Ashamed of yourself, Julie! and why, may I ask? I was delighted, and never enjoyed myself so much in my life."

"But what lengths we did go! It was too bad of you to tell Mr. Maguire to kiss me."

"Why, nobody else kisses you but me. Why didn't you return the compliment, and tell him to kiss me, too. Claude wouldn't mind; he's not jealous, and I should have liked it. It would have been all fun, you know."

"But it seems to me to be going beyond fun."

"You're thinking of Hawley. He jealous! Why, he doesn't know how to love yet, and

how can he be jealous? Besides, he don't know anything about it, and if he did, well, I shouldn't care a rush. I think it would be a capital thing to make him jealous; no, I shouldn't—not jealous of you, Julie—for, to tell you my mind plainly, I hope you will never have him."

"Mary!"

"Well, I mean what I say. The idea of loving a man who doesn't love you! He can't love you, Julie; or, if he does, he loves as I never saw a man love in my life."

"Hawley is singular, but he's a very studious man."

"Singular! Indeed, he is singular! Singularly cold and formal—singularly unpleasant, in my way of thinking. That's just it, he's in love with his books, not with you. Let him go and court Tacitus, whom he talks so much about. Give him up, Julie! Why, he has not spoken a single word to you since breakfast this morning. The man's positively

unbearable. Don't you say a word to him at dinner-time ; I won't, you may rely on it. Let him speak to us first ; and then we'll get out of the room as quick as we can."

"Don't you think, Mary, we went too far this morning?"

"Not a bit, not far enough."

"Mary, how can you say so?"

"Come, now, Julie, let us have no nonsense between cousin sisters. You like Morey, don't you?"

"Yes, I like him, certainly ; it's impossible not to like him."

"Quite as much as Hawley?"

"What a question, Mary !"

"Well, answer it, or I'll answer it for you. I know you do, better than Hawley."

"He's more cheerful and conversable, certainly."

"Yes and more loveable. I won't be too hard on you. If you didn't think so I should think worse of you than I do ; I should think

you downright stupid. Do you want to be bothered with Latin and Greek all your life?"

"Of course not."

"Do you want to be talked to about stale, learned, antiquated stuff till your head is ready to split?"

"Of course not, Mary."

"Do you want to be always bowed to and never spoken to? Do you want to be left alone all the mornings and afternoons of your life? Do you want never to be asked to take a walk, or have a romp, or anything else pleasant?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you will be, I can tell you, if you accept Hawley Paget. Do you want never to be kissed, and called darling and pet, and all that's natural and nice? Come, be candid, and speak like a sensible girl."

"Certainly I should like to be kissed sometimes."

“Then you won’t be, I can tell you. He has only kissed you once already. Make up your mind that it shall be the last. I couldn’t endure that ponderous Tacitus to kiss me. Let him go and kiss his old musty books and parchments. Oh, Julie, you’re not half a woman if you are going to surrender without courting. Give him up! Let him see when he comes in to tea to-night that you are as indifferent to him as he is to you. We’ll talk together, and let him see, though we don’t know Latin and Greek, we are very comfortable, and can, when we like, be very merry.”

Julia, in her own private thoughts had, more than once, contrasted Hawley’s strangely frigid behaviour with the hearty and thoroughly genial character of Maguire. As she sat at lunch this day she could not help making the contrast, and after the rollicking humour of the morning, the afternoon did seem very flat indeed. “What was the matter with Haw-

ley?" she asked, "he never spoke a word to either of us. To say the least it was very rude of him, Polly."

"Rude! I should think it was rude; it was bearish, though he can affect so much formal politeness. I suppose he thinks we are not worth talking to, as we don't talk on his learned subjects."

"I really am quite tired of so much learning."

"To be sure you are. Don't have any more of it; give him up, Julie; take my advice, and give him up."

"I do like him, Mary, somehow, I must confess."

"What can you see to like in such a man?"

"Well, he is very gentlemanly, and very polite, and, in his way, kind. I think, too, he loves me, notwithstanding all his apparent coldness."

"Now there you are going back again to

Hawley, after all I have said and you have admitted."

"Well, you must allow, Mary, that Hawley is a person of great refinement of mind, and of very high moral principle."

"And isn't Morey a person of refined mind and high moral principle? Has he forfeited your good opinion because he acted his part so admirably, and seemed so earnest as your lover, and kissed you like a sensible fellow, when I told him to do so?"

"Don't let us talk any more on the matter, Polly. Shall we go for a walk this afternoon as far as the beach. I shall be so glad of the sea air?"

"So shall I. Let us go. They show pretty plainly they don't want us down stairs, let us show them that we are quite happy without them. We won't come in till dinner-time. It will be delightful on the beach this hot afternoon. Besides Morey said he generally

took a stroll on the sea-shore after his early dinner."

"Oh! we mustn't meet Mr. Maguire again, Polly; twice in the same day, you know."

"Then we had better not go so far as the beach, for he will be almost certain to be there."

"The sea will be so refreshing, and we can sit down there till it's time to return."

"Oh, I'm quite agreeable, Julie."

"Shall we take two or three peaches, Polly?"

"I think we had better take three, dear—three fine ones."

Julia plucked three of the finest, and, as she and Mary returned to the Grange for dinner, said—

"It was lucky we took three peaches with us, wasn't it? But it was your thoughtful suggestion, Polly; I was only going to take two."

"So I was to go without one, eh, Julie?"

CHAPTER VI.

A CASUS BELLI.

HAWLEY PAGET did not remain long in the dining-room after lunch in conversation with Mr. Threlfall, but withdrew to the retirement of the library, not, however, as he had purposed in the morning to pass the time in company with Tacitus, for, after the strange events of that day, he could not read, but only sink into the perplexities of his own troubled meditations. He was profoundly pained and miserably uneasy at what he had discovered

in the course of his morning walk; his usually calm, reflective state of mind, which found so much refined, intellectual pleasure and satisfaction in the study of his favourite authors, was now ruffled and disturbed by agitating thoughts which allowed him no repose. He threw himself into his chair, wretched and bewildered, staring wildly and vacantly at the books on the shelves, like a man on whom some terrible calamity had fallen, utterly confounded and lost. His lips quivered, and there was a visible trembling of his whole frame, against which he struggled painfully, grasping with both his hands the sides of the chair on which his arms lay extended. Once he made an effort to rise, but a sense of prostration obliged him to keep his seat. The whole force of the shock was now falling on him with a weight which was scarcely supportable, and he was conscious of nothing but dreadful pressure and unutterable misery.

“What can it all mean?” he gasped audibly,

as he made an effort to shake off the heavy load, the weight of which was so crushing, and to rouse himself from a reverie in which he began to feel faint and sick at heart. "What can it all mean?"

In whichever way he looked he could see nothing but what stung him with very acute sensations of pain. Was it the immodesty of what he had heard, and been assured by the boisterous sounds of mirth from the little woody enclosure, that so profoundly affected him? Sensitive as he was on the score of morals, he was not thinking now of the immodesty; it was not that, nor the rude sounds of noisy laughter, which, at another time, he would have shrunk from as a vulgar outburst of excited bucolic feeling; it was that Julia, whom he had taken to the bosom of his confidence and affection, was faithless to him,—she who had pledged her word to be his, his only, his for ever; that she, who never seemed weary of listening to him as he discoursed to

her of the profoundest subjects of human thought and laid at her feet all the treasures of his reading and reflection, was secretly deceiving him, and indulging privately a clandestine amour with a man who had not the honour to appear at her uncle's house, but was skulking at a low way-side inn, making and keeping assignations with her.

The possibility of such a thing had never once occurred to him, and now that it had occurred the sting was the more acute, and the violence of the shock more severe. His first impulse was to tell her that he had discovered her treachery and how, and then immediately take his departure from the Grange, and his farewell of her for ever. In the excitement of his hasty resolve he went out of the library into the hall on his way to the drawing-room, where he met Thomas, and made inquiries for Miss Julia. She was not at home, but had gone out again with Miss Threlfall. He returned to his own solitude

in the library, thought the subject over again, as calmly as his excited state would allow, and was glad that he had been prevented the execution of his first impulsive purpose. She had gone out again. Probably on the same furtive errand. Was at that moment, perhaps, in the company of this Maguire. Mary, too, was in the secret; was aiding and abetting her. Mary was perhaps the cause of it all. Was it not she who had challenged Maguire to kiss Julia? Was it not she who, by her clapping of hands and laughter, showed how eager she was to urge on this disgraceful affair? Mary was at the bottom of it, of that he began to be persuaded, and Julia had been drawn into it, perhaps unwillingly; perhaps she had not been compromised at all. Maguire may have taken a liberty with her at the invitation of Mary, but why should he conclude that Julia had approved of it? It was all Mary's doing. Was she not sarcastic, almost personal, and sometimes even actually rude

to him. She didn't like him; he was quite sure that Miss Mary didn't like him. Not a doubt of it, he said to himself; but it's a scheme of Miss Threlfall's to make a rupture between himself and Julia. Julia might be, nay, must be innocent after all.

He was very much comforted by these reflections, and when he again reviewed all the circumstances, he could come, in his hopeful mood, to no other conclusion than that his Julia, through Miss Threlfall, had got into the society of a bold, ill-bred young man, and was very likely repenting of the indiscretion into which she had been betrayed.

He took up his Homer to divert his mind from any further reflection on the painful subject of his thoughts. He began to read of Ulysses in the Palace of Circe, but Circe was not a pleasant suggestion, and he threw the book aside for the "Annals of Tacitus," in which he read, apparently forgetful of all his woe, till dinner time.

Hawley Paget had intended to demean himself at dinner as if he were not privy to the events of the morning, and not in the least disturbed by them. But although, like all persons of cultivated intellect, and accustomed to the reservations and undemonstrativeness of good society, he knew generally how to control the outward expression of his feelings, when he sat down at dinner his self-command very much deserted him, and he looked and spoke with the same visible signs of constraint as were observable in him at the earlier meal. Both Julia and Mary noticed this, and not understanding the reason of it, ascribed it to his natural reserve and customary stiffness and formality. His politeness to-day, after the large measure of natural freedom they had enjoyed with the hearty, frolicsome Maguire, seemed to them both more offensively frigid than ever, and they instinctively resented it by an affectation of careless ease, and even merriment, which aggravated rather than im-

proved matters. Who was Hawley, thought Mary to herself, that he should come there and inflict his starched airs upon them, and freeze them into a stiffness so unnatural to them ?

“ Why should I think so much of Hawley ?” Julia was asking herself, “ when he hardly condescends to speak with or even notice me ?”

They had already made up their minds, too, it will be remembered, to exhibit an utter indifference to him, beyond what was demanded by the rules of strict courtesy ; so they chatted together incessantly about nothing in particular, and only for the sake of talking, while he and Mr. Threlfall were conversing, and ever and anon they enlivened their end of the table by titterings and merry little confidences, scarcely above a whisper, which were always followed by catches of half-suppressed laughter, and sometimes by laughing outright.

Oh ! that laughter—how suggestive it was ! How it did irritate and even harrow the nerves of poor Hawley. Could Julia be merry and laugh to-day, if she had been an unwilling performer in the shameful proceedings of that morning ? All his favourable constructions of her conduct—all his hopes of her seemed to vanish with that laughter. He turned round again and again, looking with painful astonishment at her. Julia twice caught his eye as he did so, and she saw something like rebuke, and even reproach in its expression. What did Hawley mean by looking at her in that way ? At the second glance of his eye, she confronted him with a look not of mere surprise, but, as he interpreted it, of angry defiance. It was not imagination on his part, though he may have exaggerated its defiant force ; Julia was really angry, and threw her displeasure into her facial expression quite intentionally. Hawley, she now felt, was not merely formal and stiff

in his bearing towards her—he was downright offensive and unbearably rude ; and when Mary moved from her seat, she did not follow her, but linked her arm in her cousin's, and went out, before Hawley could get to the door, with the air of one who seemed as if she could have snapped her fingers at him.

Nothing could have been more unfortunate for all parties concerned than the way in which dinner had passed off. Hawley had cast down something very like a gauntlet at the feet of his Julia, in those glances of his offended eye, and Julia had taken it up with a resentful glance in return, and had gone out of the room with the feeling that war was declared between them.

Was it not a *casus belli*? What girl would submit to be cowed and frowned upon in that way by the man who professed to be her lover? Hawley should see that she was not the tame, frightened creature that he imagined her to be ! Was she a school girl, to be cor-

rected and drilled into his notions of propriety, as if he were some pedantic madame of a schoolmistress? If this was to be endured in the season of courtship, what might she have to endure after her marriage with such a man? Marriage! she scorned the idea of it, and said to herself that she never would be married, and almost added that she never would, at all events, marry Hawley Paget.

Mary was in the same high-toned, indignant mood as Julia, and kept her cousin well strung up the whole of that evening. When Hawley came into the drawing-room, he was less himself than ever. Even his politeness forsook him as he accepted tea at the hands of Mary, and Julia might not have been in the room at all, so utterly indifferent was he to her presence. The cousins, therefore, as they had previously concerted together, were wholly engrossed in each other. Tea passed over in silence, so far as Hawley Paget was concerned, for, as he was never once spoken

to beyond what the courtesies of the tea-table required, he never spoke either to Julia or Mary; and when tea was over, both ladies went to the piano, and, in turn, sang and played their lightest and liveliest airs, either to express their own cheerful emotions, or make up for the absence of cheerfulness in the two gentlemen.

Uncle Threlfall was not at all cheerful, for he seemed to be weary of the frigidity of his guest, and was very soon fast asleep, so that Hawley sat alone looking over the pages of a table-book, in which he seemed to find not the least interest, as he kept turning over the pages backwards and forwards with great rapidity, as if he were in a state of irritable nervousness. Both the ladies were indefatigable at the music, which never ceased till it was time for all to retire, and then they all at once remembered that Mr. Threlfall was asleep, and went together to wake him up with a kiss

of farewell for the night. A respectful adieu was taken of Hawley Paget, who returned it with as much politeness as his feelings permitted him to command.

CHAPTER VII.

HAWLEY PAGET, AS A STUDENT OF THE INNER
TEMPLE, REQUIRES NO FURTHER PROOF.

It was quite impossible that the matter should remain in this state. Hawley Paget was convinced now that Julia was not only carrying on a secret amour with Mr. Maguire, but that she had already exhibited an alienation of feeling towards himself that was unmistakable, and not to be quietly endured. He went to his room this night as indignant as he had been grieved at her conduct, and resolved that

he would acquaint her, in the morning, with all he knew of her behaviour, and demand from her an explanation. Julia's conduct had been most reprehensible, and he made up his mind, if her explanation was not satisfactory, and he could not see how it should be satisfactory after her strangely altered demeanour that evening, that he would renounce all claim to her hand, and at once quit the Grange.

It was late before he went to his bed, for he resolved to do nothing rashly, and that he would not nurse his indignation at the cost of his discretion. But the more he reflected the more deeply fixed was his resolution to bring the matter to an issue. His resolve was confirmed by the cool and, as he fancied, the haughty air of both Julia and Mary on the following morning at breakfast. He withdrew to his own room for the purpose of calming his agitated feelings, and thinking how he should proceed, and what he would say. There he sat quite an hour looking out of the

window deep in thought. It happened that his bedroom window overlooked the back garden, and he saw Julia there, dressed as if for a walk, with a little basket in her hand. He watched her, and observed that she was walking backwards and forwards looking intently at the fruit trees on the garden wall, and at length he saw her busy selecting a few peaches and placing them in her basket ; and then she was gone, gone towards the farther end of the garden, and did not return towards the house. Now was his opportunity, as she was alone, and he hastened to follow her that he might speak with her privately in the garden. But, although he lost no time in executing his purpose, when he looked about for her she was nowhere to be seen. She could not have come back to the house, so he went on and out through the gate at the farther end, and then he caught sight of her just as she was crossing a stile into the field. Lest he should again lose sight of her, he

hastened on and got over the stile, and then again he saw her, but now she was quickening her pace.

Whither was she going, alone too, and in such a hurry? Was it possible that she was hastening to meet Maguire! He could hardly doubt it, for she was going in the direction of the Copse. He must follow her and see, for the impulse was in him, and he was unconscious, in the excitement of the moment, of any degradation in playing the part of a spy on the actions of a lady. If she was keeping an assignation with this man, of which he had now the opportunity of assuring himself, he would need no further proof of her guilt. He would at once disclaim her and disown her for ever. The nature of the country favoured the concealment of himself as he quickened his pace to keep up with her. She never once stopped nor looked behind, and if she had done so the scattered clumps of trees and brushwood would have effectually concealed him. On he

went, and determined to be satisfied. Yes, she was bearing direct towards the Copse, which was now in sight, and lay a little to the right. Now she had crossed the high road, and was ascending a gentle slope on the opposite side, and he hurried forward, as his position was just then an exposed one, and from where she was, had she looked back on the way she came, he must have been discovered. With his eye fixed on her, he made the best of his way to the stile she had last crossed, and stopped awhile there, concealed by the high hedge-row. It was well he did, for he had scarcely reached his hiding-place when he heard a voice as if calling to someone, and he saw her stop and look behind. Then she turned back, and now his well-grounded suspicions were all confirmed, for there was the person who had hailed her running to meet her. Hawley saw them meet ; it was a cordial meeting too, for there was much shaking of hands, and he heard the

sounds of laughter—that hateful laughter—though more subdued. This must be Maguire, and he was sufficiently near to see that he was a young, handsome man. Forward they went together, and, he could see clearly, with buoyant steps and in merry mood, and now they were descending on the other side. He crossed the road and went cautiously up the slope, keeping near the trees as he advanced, which skirted and overhung the road. As he crept along in his safe concealment, for he durst not descend for fear of discovery, he again saw them just as they were running down into the little hollow where he himself had sat a few days ago. They had hold of each other's hands, and were skipping, jumping, and laughing boisterously all the way down, quite unconscious of being observed in such a retired place. And then they sat down close together, and were evidently much interested in something, for Maguire had taken something from his breast-pocket and their heads were close

together. In this attitude they remained some time, and then there was something apparently very amusing, for both laughed heartily. And now Julia took up her little basket, and threw away the grape leaves which covered the contents, and was taking out the peaches, and, after handling them very delicately, presented one to her companion and took another for herself. The conversation was not sufficiently loud that he could overhear what they said—it seemed to be quite a tête-à-tête affair. What should he do? He had seen enough, more than enough. There sat his Julia in company with Maguire, with a secret between them, eating peaches, talking in low voices, laughing together. He stood irresolute, with his eyes steadily fixed on them. Should he go down and surprise them, and then and there confront the faithless girl, and denounce and disown her in the presence of her lover? No, that would not do; it would be too exciting, and bring him into disagree-

able conflict with Maguire, who would naturally resent any affront to Julia. He hated excitement and noisy conflicts, and could not endure anything of the nature of a row. Besides, had he not followed and played the spy on her? And he began to feel ashamed of himself as he stood there peering out from behind the trees and bushes. The discovery of himself would give her and her paramour an advantage which they would not fail to use, and he could not bear to be reproached as a sneaking eavesdropper. No, he would return by the way he came, and keep the hateful discovery he had made in the secrecy of his own bosom.

On his way back, chafing at the wrong he had endured, he decided that he would not see Julia again. He would leave the Grange that morning, and turn his back on it for ever.

Neither Mr. Threlfall nor his daughter were within when he reached the house. He was

not sorry, for he had been unable to frame an excuse, consistent with truth, to explain the reason of his sudden departure. He, therefore, requested Thomas to inform his master, on his return, that a matter of some importance obliged him to return to Dover immediately. Thomas was to say that he had gone to the Drum to take the Deal and Dover coach, which he had only just time to catch, and that his portmanteau could follow by the same conveyance the next day.

He arrived at the end of the road just as the coach was driving by, and took his seat beside the driver. On their way back they would have to pass the Copse and the dell, and he was sorry that he had not got inside, as he did not wish to be seen. The coachman was very communicative about the topography of the places they passed by in their drive, and when they came to the spot which Hawley knew so well and hated the sight of—

“There now,” said the driver, pointing

with his whip at the place, "there's a pretty little spot just behind them trees, sir; just the place for a pic-nic. It's the prettiest little bit o' ground about here. They call it the Dingle; you can't see into it for them trees, but it's close along side the Copse."

The coachman had scarcely given this piece of unnecessary information when the horses swerved from their path at a boisterous explosion of laughter.

"Dang it," shouted the coachman, gathering up the reins sharply, "they did that very same thing the day afore yesterday. There's people in there now a pic-nicing, or amusing themselves; but I wish they wouldn't laugh quite so blusterously. It'd be no joke, sir, to be all pitched over that there hedge, in a bust o' laughter, too."

CHAPTER VIII.

JULIA AND MARY ARE QUITE SURE THAT HAWLEY
IS OFFENDED.

MARY had been unavoidably detained this morning by domestic matters, at least so she said, as an excuse for not accompanying Julia as usual to the rendezvous; but about half-an-hour after her cousin's departure she set out for the Copse, passing out the front way and going by the road.

Thus she did not encounter Hawley on his way back to the Grange, and she had joined

her colleagues by the time he passed outside the Deal and Dover coach; and it was probably due to her innate love of mischief that that almost disastrous contretemps of laughter occurred, on which the coachman had somewhat angrily commented, and which his box passenger did not seem at all to enjoy.

They only reached home in time to throw off their hats and hasten in to lunch, rather hot and a little excited by the hurry of their walk.

"Hawley's gone, girls!" exclaimed Mr. Threlfall, the moment they made their appearance.

"Gone!" exclaimed both, with amazement.

"Gone where?"

"Gone back to Dover."

"But he will return, uncle," said Julia, "I suppose to-day?"

"No, he's not coming back, for he has ordered his portmanteau to be sent on by the Deal coach to-morrow."

Julia and Mary looked at each other in astonishment.

“Gone! and not coming back!” said Mary; “and without saying good-bye to us?”

“Yes, I didn’t see him; I was with the reapers. He left word that important business called him to Dover, and he was off to catch the Deal coach.”

“Hawley might have awaited our return,” replied Mary, “the carriage was at his service, and he would not have lost much time.”

“Yes, so I thought; but I suppose his business was urgent, and business, you know, must be attended to.”

Neither said any more on the subject, but took a hurried lunch, and left Mr. Threlfall to enjoy his nap.

“I don’t believe it’s business, Mary,” said Julia, when they were alone, “that has taken Hawley off in this pop. He’s offended about something, I’m quite sure.”

“And haven’t we reason to be offended?” returned her cousin. “You especially, Julie? Why, ever since he has been here he’s been as glumpy and mum as if we had annoyed him. He scarcely took any notice of us, and when he did speak—good gracious!—it was just as if he were taking us to task about something.”

“Did you see how he looked at me, Polly, after dinner yesterday?”

“See! of course I saw, and I saw you give him a good look back. I felt as if I could have thrown a filbert in his face. Wasn’t it rude of him?”

“What did he mean by it?”

“I don’t know, Julie, what he meant by it. He’s a most mysterious person, and a very disagreeable one, too.”

“Well,” returned Julia, “if he’s so poppish, and chooses to take offence at nothing, let him go.”

“He’s gone, and good riddance, I say,” added her cousin.

“ I suppose he’ll write to explain his strange conduct.”

“ I don’t know, Julie, and, what is more, I don’t care. If he should write I should treat the matter very coolly, if I were you.”

“ Indeed, I shall, you may be sure of that.”

“ Well, he’s gone, and let us think no more about him. You can’t want him back, I’m sure, Julie.”

“ So Claude is on his way to Florence, Polly ?”

“ He must be there by this time. Here’s the little note which he enclosed for papa. I hope he has said nothing which will betray where he is and what he’s doing.”

“ I hope not, or we shall be asked our opinion, and what can we say in explanation ? I shall tell no fibs.”

“ Then I shall, if necessary, so you had better leave me to answer any questions. It won’t do to make a mess of the thing now we have gone so far, will it ?”

“Well, no, I suppose not.”

Julia, when she gave this assenting reply to her cousin, did not seem to feel anything about the moral predicament in which her cousin's question placed her. She could not for her own part tell fibs, and it was very convenient that Mary could, and with a good bold face. Certainly it would never do to let uncle have the least suspicion where her brother was.

“Claude writes in capital spirits, Julie; what a dear, cunning fellow he is, isn't he? Do you know, I do like Claude, and I think all the better for his being such a sly rogue. He's very clever, isn't he?”

“I wish he were not so sly, Polly.”

“Well, I don't; it keeps him always up to something and makes him clever.”

“I don't think it's good for people to be so sly, Polly.”

“Don't you, Julie? Then why are you so sly, eh, puss? Aren't you sly, Julie? Haven't

you been meeting some one all alone on the sly this very morning?"

And Mary laughed at her cousin's prim moralizing.

"Oh, Polly! you know you said you couldn't go with me for quite an hour or perhaps longer. And, of course, we couldn't keep Mr. Maguire waiting all that time."

"Did he kiss you again, Julie?"

"Of course he did not, Mary; how can you ask such a ridiculous question."

"I hope nobody saw you both, if he did."

"I don't mind who saw us, for there was nothing improper, I'm sure."

"Well, I suppose we must write to Claude. You'll write as well as me, Julie, of course. Don't let us tell him the same things. Suppose you tell him all about Hawley, and how strangely he has behaved, and I'll tell him all about our meetings in the Copse."

"You'll tell him no nonsense, Polly."

"Of course not, dear; I shall tell him

nothing but the plain truth. I'll tell him, too, about that narrow escape at the Drum. How he will laugh !”

So they sat down to write good long letters to Claude, telling him all the news since he had left home ; and each thought she had a great deal to say, and both had filled their sheets with very small writing, and crossed throughout ; and Mary found it necessary to go to the library for her papa's red ink to write a page and a half more diagonally. Thus they were employed till the gong sounded a five minutes' warning that dinner was nearly served, and they hurried to their room to get ready.

“ Of course, you have heard, too, from Claude,” said Mr. Threlfall, as Julia handed him the little note not without some apprehension.

“ Yes, we have both heard from him, uncle.”

“ It seems very short; I should like to see

what he says. Excuse me keeping you waiting just a minute."

"Shall I read it for you, papa," said the prompt Mary, offering to take the note.

"No, thank you, Polly ; Claude writes very plainly, and I have my spectacles here. Ah! as I thought," reading a half sheet of note paper written only on two sides, "'Hardly five minutes to call my own: going circuit hard work, plenty to do, no pay for a half-fledged gentleman of the robe like me. Pick up a good deal; see and hear a good deal. No time for reading or writing, only seeing and talking. Fine weather, splendid, sun always shining, very hot. Here to-day and off again. Barrister's life hard work; thoroughly enjoy it, don't care for vacations, getting lots of experience; shall turn this circuit to some account. Sorry to leave you, dear uncle, so soon, and so suddenly too. Kind love to you and Polly and Julie; scratched them a hasty note each. How's Hawley Paget? Kind re-

gards to him ; hope to see him some day.' Ah ! very good," said Mr. Threlfall, having read his little note in this disjointed fashion out loud, "very brief, quite enough for a busy man, though. I like a man to be busy. So Claude has scratched, as he calls it, something to you, eh?"

"Yes, papa ; very short, though, and nothing of interest beyond what you have read. By-the-bye, he does tell us that he is quite well, which he does not seem to have said in your note."

"No ; glad to hear it, my dear. I took that for granted. Does he say where he is ; he merely dates my letter. An oversight, too busy to think about it. I wonder where he is now, eh?"

"At dinner, no doubt, papa," replied Mary, with a laugh, "as we ought to be."

Mr. Threlfall laughed too, and seemed quite satisfied with the playful answer of his daughter, for he took his seat at the table, and

Thomas removed the covers, and Mary, all dinner time, was full of interest about the corn field which the reapers had been busy at all day, and asked all sorts of questions about wheat and the corn-market, and quite drove all farther thought of Claude out of her papa's mind.

CHAPTER IX.

MOREY MAGUIRE OBTAINS A PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT, AND RECEIVES A SIGNIFICANT HINT.

ALTHOUGH Julia affected not to be much concerned at Hawley's sudden departure, and assumed the air of a person who had been treated very discourteously, she did, nevertheless experience some disquiet, and in her secret heart was sorry that her lover had gone. For Hawley, she was quite sure, did love her, and she, on her side, loved him. Personally, with just one deduction for his

extreme formality of appearance and demeanour, he was a good-looking and extremely gentlemanly man, possessed of considerable educational acquirements and refinement of culture; and if he did sometimes vex her with his excessive studiousness, and weary her with his frequent prosiness on subjects quite beyond her range of reading, yet he was always desirous of entertaining her, and adding to her store of knowledge. Whenever he touched on her own favourite topics, he was really entertaining, and, indeed, quite charming, for he cast so much light on passages in her favourite authors, which had before been obscure to her, and brought out so much meaning from familiar portions which she had not discovered before, that it was a real enjoyment to her to read with him, or listen to his expositions, lengthy as they were. He certainly was very deficient in a good many respects to fully satisfy the delicately tender sensibilities of a girl who had given

her heart to him ; and she did think it very extraordinary that he never indulged in those sweet endearments which make the progress of courtship so pleasant. Hawley never did seek or make, as he might have done, opportunities of privacy, and if they happened accidentally, he seemed either not to care for them or to know how to turn them to advantage. He was demonstrative in a certain way, but it was so studiously respectful, and seemed to be forthcoming rather from his fine sense of good breeding, or his profound intellectuality, than from his heart. Yes, Julia was sorry that he had gone, and for the manner in which he had taken his departure ; and she felt sure that the resentment she had allowed herself to indulge on the previous day and that morning at breakfast, had wounded him very deeply. She fully believed that she had been the cause of his going away, and began to feel very unhappy about it.

Mary was quick enough to discern what was passing in her cousin's mind, and did everything in her power to divert her from thinking of Hawley; and when the fourth day had passed since he had left and no explanation—not even a note—came from him, Julia began to feel herself aggrieved, and secretly accused her lover of a hardness and indifference with which she had not been disposed to credit him.

A week passed and nothing came from Hawley, nor was anything heard of him; and now Julia felt that a serious rupture had occurred between them, and her maidenly pride was deeply wounded at the neglect of which he was guilty towards her.

It was some diversion from the broodings of her mind on the conduct of Hawley that each day she and Mary kept their appointments with Maguire, who was always the same genial, jovial fellow, and kept them both in such a high pitch of good spirits.

And then, too, he brought so frequently a letter from Claude, which gave them so much to talk about, that gradually Julia regained her cheerfulness, and was only occasionally troubled about her apostate lover. The picture after Watteau was now finished and greatly admired, as it deserved to be, by both the cousins, and Maguire had requested Julia's acceptance of it, which gave her very great pleasure.

It was when about a week had expired that Mary had a very pleasant bit of news to bring to the rendezvous, with which even Julia was not acquainted. This was that Mary had claimed the fulfilment of her papa's promise to allow her to have lessons in water-colour drawing, and she had told papa that she had heard of a very competent teacher, and it had been agreed between them that Mr. Maguire was to be invited to come the very next day, and to give a lesson of two hours every succeeding day, as the time was now so very

short, only a fortnight before they took their departure to the Isle of Wight.

This was surprising and delightful news indeed. There would be no longer any need of secrecy about their acquaintance with Mr. Maguire, and that talkative Mrs. Davis would now see that he could come openly to the Grange every day. Morey Maguire went the next day and was introduced to Mr. Threlfall, who received him very politely.

We must not linger over the events of the next fortnight. Maguire made himself very agreeable, not only to the young ladies, but also to Mr. Threlfall himself, who frequently asked him to dinner, and chatted with him over their wine about pictures, with which he considered he had some acquaintance.

“ You see I have some knowledge of your art, Mr. Maguire,” he said, on one occasion, “ and know a good picture when I see it. I’m fond of pictures, sir, as you may suppose by a glance at my walls ; but I can rarely

enjoy the pleasure of the society of gentlemen of your profession. I have a nephew who has always had a bias to drawing and painting, the son of an artist, my younger brother, who made a sad hash of his painting. It was a very sad case, indeed, was that of my brother, and I resolved that my nephew Claude should never follow in his father's steps. If he were to turn artist—but he never will now, for I've made a barrister of him—I wouldn't leave him a farthing. He knows it, and like a sensible young fellow he has taken earnestly to the bar. I never mean to have another artist in my family. After my expressions of admiration for your art, Mr. Maguire, and the pleasure which your company personally gives me, you will not think me disrespectful when I say that such is my dread of there ever being another artist in my family that I would cut off my niece or even my own daughter if she were to marry one."

Mr. Threlfall probably spoke thus, because he had observed that Mr. Maguire was on very friendly terms with the two young ladies, and was besides a very good-looking, fascinating young fellow. He seemed to have meant it for a hint ; at all events Maguire accepted it as such.

CHAPTER X.

JULIA THRELFALL FORMS A NEW ACQUAINTANCE
AT RYDE.

“COULDN’T be a finer morning, sir, hardly any motion in the sea, sir, and just wind enough to help us along. Wait a minute, sir, if you please, I’ll just lay her a little closer alongside. Now, miss, if you please.”

This was said by a boatman at the end of Ryde pier, as he extended his arm to a young lady to step into his trim little yacht. The young lady was Miss Mary Threlfall, who

with her cousin and papa, were now enjoying the fine month of September in the Isle of Wight, and were going out this morning for a sail.

Only three other persons were in the boat—a matronly-looking lady and two young ladies and these six, with a couple of boatmen, pushed off and were quickly under sail for a run as far as Cowes and back.

“Did you ever see the sea so green, Julie? One might almost fancy it a green field, but for the motion, mightn’t they?”

“It would be a deep stain to turn that green red, Polly, wouldn’t it?”

“Ah! it would; but why do you make that remark, and shake your head so solemnly?”

Julia smiled and said—

“Your remark recalled the words of Lady Macbeth to my mind—

‘Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.’

You wouldn't like, Polly, green as the sea is and like a beautiful meadow, to sail to Cowes this morning with one of Macbeth's witches—

‘But in a sieve I'll thither sail.’ ”

“Good gracious ! no, Julie.”

The matronly lady, who was sitting on the opposite side of the boat, smiled on Julia and said—

“You seem to be familiar with our great dramatist. Shakspeare hardly ever fails us when we want suitable language to express our thoughts whether they be grave or gay.”

“I love Shakspeare,” replied Julia, with enthusiasm ; “I wish I knew him by heart.”

“We see too little of him,” returned the lady, “on the stage.”

“Shakspeare must be read to be enjoyed,” said Julia. “I have had but few opportunities of seeing him acted, and then I have been very much disappointed.”

“You mean that we have but few good

actors. It's a noble art is that of the player."

"I know nothing of actors and actresses; but I quite think with you that their art is a high one. I should like to know some of these people. As Hamlet says, the players should be 'well bestowed' and 'well used,' 'for they are the abstract, and brief chronicles of the time.'"

The two younger ladies now took part in the conversation, which became animated on the subject of the drama, and so pleased was each with the other, that by the time the boat ran alongside the Ryde pier again a sort of acquaintanceship had sprung up, and the senior lady, as they all walked along the pier, said it would give her very great pleasure if Mr. Threlfall, and his niece and daughter, would take lunch with them at Stratford Villa.

Mutual introductions had taken place in the boat on the way back from Cowes, and the

family from Walmer Grange were aware that they were going to be the guests of Mrs. and Miss Bracegirdle, and Miss Margaret Melville.

It was a very agreeable surprise, to Julia especially, that the young lady whom both she and Mary admired so much and took quite a fancy to was introduced to them a second time, during lunch, as Miss Melville, a very successful and promising young actress.

The visit was returned on the following day at Mr. Threlfall's lodgings, and from that time the two parties were nearly always together in their promenades and yachting excursions.

The four young ladies had met on the third morning of their acquaintance for a stroll in the neighbourhood of the pier, and Miss Bracegirdle and Mary, leading the way, went on the pier to enjoy the sea breezes.

"We'll join you on the pier presently," said Miss Melville; and without consulting the in-

clination of Julia she said, "I very much wish to speak a word with you privately," and drew her aside in another direction.

"You will be surprised, Miss Julia Threlfall, when I tell you that I know something of your family. I have been introduced to you under my professional name; my own name is Margaret Maguire."

"Margaret Maguire, the sister of Morey Maguire!" exclaimed Julia, greatly amazed to find herself in the company of that young lady, of whom Morey had frequently spoken, although he had said nothing of his sister being an actress.

"The same," returned Margaret, "and therefore you will understand that I am well acquainted with your brother Claude, as he resides with us at St. John's Wood, and am in the secret of his difficulties with your uncle. Of course I know all about it."

Julia looked at her companion and said

nothing for a moment, so completely amazed was she at what she heard.

“It is curious, isn’t it, that we should have met in this way?” continued Margaret. “Of course I knew instantly who you were when your uncle gave his name and address and introduced us all to each other. But neither of my friends know anything of this, and for Claude’s sake they must not know it. I have taken this opportunity of speaking with you privately because I did not know whether your cousin Mary was in the secret.”

“Yes, Mary is in the secret,” said Julia, “and she will be surprised when I tell her who you are.”

“Is it well, think you, that she should know while we are all together? You will know best, but your cousin seems a very impulsive person, and if we are seen to be so intimate together it may excite curiosity on the part of my friends the Bracegirdles, and some incon-

venient questions may be put to one or other of us."

"I don't like to have any secrets from my cousin," replied Julia, "but if she knew who you are she might, in her frank, open way, claim an intimacy with you that would be sure to attract attention. She is such a dear, impulsive creature, that she would take you to her bosom at once, and speak and act towards you as though you were her sister."

"Then pray do not let her know anything about me till you return home. Of course, as one in her cousin Claude's secret, she will approve of your discretion, even though she was not taken into our confidence. Mrs. Bracegirdle is a most observant woman, and would be certain to notice anything approaching to secrecy between us three, and would put some question to me about it. I see clearly the kind of girl your cousin is, all heart, prompt to say what comes uppermost, much too impulsive to be very discreet."

“Yes, Mary is what you say, but she can keep a secret of this kind even better than I. She is, I assure you, a consummate conspirator, and really enjoys a thing of this kind much more than I do.”

“I fancy so, but I see danger in this very enthusiasm. She will be taking me too much aside, and there will be more ‘asides,’ as we say on the stage, than will be consistent with keeping our secret close. We must not be caught whispering, and be seen seeking each other out, and going off together. Fanny Bracegirdle will soon become conscious that she is excluded from something, and it will make matters unpleasant between her and me. Take my advice, and say nothing to your cousin Mary till you get home. We have been long enough away as it is; let us return to the pier at once.”

Julia, as she walked back with Margaret to rejoin their companions, was almost sorry that she had discovered who Margaret was, as it

involved the desirableness of keeping the matter a secret from her cousin. But the more she turned it over in her mind the more convinced was she that Margaret had advised the most prudent course. Mary, she knew, would be thick with Margaret in no time, and then, besides Claude's affair, she knew that her cousin would find another matter of interest to talk about privately with Margaret. Ever since Morey Maguire had come openly to the Grange she had been more intent than ever in urging on the match between herself and him, and had several times placed them both in very delicate and awkward predicaments. She did not wish Mary to talk with Margaret about this matter, for though she did like Morey, her heart's affections had not been quite withdrawn from Hawley.

Yes, Margaret was right ; Mary should for the present only know her as Miss Melville.

CHAPTER XI.

“OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.”

MOREY MAGUIRE returned home to Titian Villa the day before the Threlfalls left for Ryde. He had really fallen in love with Julia, and was quite disposed to avail himself of every advantage which Mary was so studiously anxious to afford him in his designs on her cousin. But from the day of the mock love scene in the Dingle, Mary had been so bold, and even boisterous in all her manœuvres, that she had, quite unintentionally, seriously

interrupted any real love-making by her excessive demonstrativeness and officious intermeddling between the two victims. It was scarcely avoidable either on Julia's or Maguire's part to treat the whole affair as a mimicry of love throughout, and Morey, who was seriously inclined in the matter, was often very much annoyed with Mary for not allowing the affair to take its own quieter and more natural course. He found it utterly impossible to make love under such circumstances, and he bade farewell to the Grange with the feeling that he was rather regarded by Julia as a very intimate friend, and a kind of second brother, than one who had really aspired to be her lover.

As the intermediary in the correspondence of Claude with his family at the Grange, he had many opportunities of communicating with Julia, but he never spoke of his own sentiments towards her in these communications, and Julia ceased to think of him with

any other than sisterly feelings, and always replied to him as if she were writing to her brother.

Mary was disappointed that something had not come of the introduction of Maguire and Julia to each other. Morey, she thought, the more she saw of him, would make a capital husband for her cousin, and she would have plenty of money, and they would be very happy together. That he was an artist, and so clever in his profession, was to her an additional consideration in his favour. Claude and he, too, were like brothers. What more could she do, she often said to herself, than she had done? Mary did not see that in fact if she had not done so much, but left them more to themselves, the wished-for result might have come about. She had helped materially to separate her cousin and Hawley, and now Julia was left as bad off as ever. They were both of them very stupid, she thought, and she wondered how two people

at their age, and with their mutual liking for each other, had not managed things better.

Among the letters which came to Ryde from Walmer none ever came from Hawley Paget. At last Mr. Threlfall, at the suggestion of Julia, wrote to his old friend and professional adviser, Hawley's father, to express his surprise that they had neither seen nor heard anything of his son since he left their house. To this a reply was sent, stating that Hawley had gone almost immediately to London, and had obtained an appointment as correspondent of a leading London journal in Florence, as their own correspondent had been compelled by ill health to return to England. Important political events were just then happening in Tuscany in consequence of the abdication of the French Throne by Louis Philippe. The Republicans had proclaimed a new Government in Florence, and some competent person was required by the London journal to fill up the vacancy caused by the absence of their

usual correspondent. Hawley was, therefore, now at Florence.

Both Mary and Julia thought this a singular coincidence, and wondered whether chance would ever throw Claude and Hawley into each other's society. Julia regarded this step of Hawley's as a convincing proof that he had taken mortal offence at something, and that he meant her to understand by it that their connection was now entirely severed.

Chance did throw Claude and Hawley into each other's way, for in the great political ferment which then agitated the city he had been unable for a time to apply himself to work, and was frequently in the places of public resort listening to the hubbub of talk among the excited Florentines, of which he could make nothing, and catching hold of any Englishman or American who could give him any information. He was standing among a group of his own countrymen one morning when he was accosted by a gentleman, and

turning round confronted Hawley Paget. He knew him instantly, but suppressed as well as he could any expression of surprise at the unexpected *rencontre*. Hawley, in his professional capacity, wanted news, and asked Claude a question.

“I know all about that circumstance, Threlfall,” said [a young man who overheard the question; “if the gentleman will wait one moment, I can tell him, as an eye-witness, all about it.”

“Threlfall!” said Hawley to himself, and he looked at Claude, who was very like his sister, and observed the resemblance.

“Your name is Threlfall, sir, I think I heard your friend say; may I take the liberty to ask if you have any connections in Kent, at Walmer?”

This was a very direct question, and took Claude somewhat aback. Before he could answer, his friend, in some excitement, said to Hawley—

“Now, sir, I’m at your service. You’re a representative of the press, I presume. Just step aside with me one moment, and I’ll answer your question.”

Claude took advantage of this interruption to get out of the room, and hastened away to his lodgings.

“So Hawley Paget is here! What can he be out here for?” he asked himself. “Ah! not unlikely! Got an appointment on some paper. By Jove! Hartley got me well out of that fix. Paget and I mustn’t meet here! Confound it all, that will never do! How the fellow does follow one about, and turn up where he’s not wanted!”

After this, Claude never went out into the streets of Florence without expecting to meet the irrepressible Paget, and he always kept a sharp look out, that he might avoid him in the event of his turning up again. He made up his mind that he would trouble himself no more about local politics, but stick to his

work, and again he was at his easel in the Pitti Palace, and soon forgot all about Hawley and the new republic.

But Paget had not forgotten Claude, whose likeness to his sister so arrested his attention, and convinced him that this young Threlfall was a member of Julia's family. The likeness was sufficiently striking to awaken some painful memories in his mind, and he began to reflect on the course he had pursued with Julia, and whether, after all, he had not been too hasty in his decision to leave her without any explanation. But, no ; he had not acted without ample reason. Had he not seen her with her paramour, meeting in secret too ? Her paramour ! Why should he be so sure that Maguire was her paramour ? Her cousin Mary also met this man as well as she, and was not she engaged to Claude ? Perhaps, after all, this Maguire was a relative of theirs. Not unlikely. But why should he skulk about the neighbourhood, and meet clandes-

tinely Julia and Mary? He was an artist. An artist! Mr. Threlfall had a strange prejudice against artists; had often told him how anxious he had been to keep Claude from the society of these men. What if this were the reason why Maguire durst not present himself at the Grange? Not at all improbable. Oh! the case was clear after all. Maguire was a cousin, or some other relation of Julia and Mary. What more natural than that he should like to see his cousins, and take this secret way of meeting them, as he was denied the house? Perhaps this Maguire was another nephew of Mr. Threlfall's, and had quarrelled with his uncle about something. Not impossible, certainly! He had been hasty in leaving Julia in the manner he had done. He certainly ought to have had an explanation; but how could he without betraying himself as a spy? Here was another Threlfall in Florence, a cousin of Julia's for certain, for he was very much like her.

He had never seen this man before, and if he had been in the Copse with Julia that day romping with her like Maguire, he would have come to the same hasty conclusion and acted in the same rash way. His father, too, had written to say that he had heard from the Grange, and that great surprise had been felt that he had left them so suddenly, and never even written. Yes, he certainly had been too hasty in the affair. But how could he write now, and what could he say in explanation of his own conduct? He would call on this young Mr. Threlfall; perhaps something might come of it.

Hawley Paget, when he missed Claude all at once in his conversation with the young Englishman, asked of the stranger Mr. Threlfall's christian name and address. His informant only knew his surname, but thought he signed himself C. Threlfall. However, he could give the address, and accordingly did

so. He had asked the profession of Mr. C. Threlfall, and learnt that he was an artist.

Much to Claude's annoyance, no less than surprise, a card was brought him one morning, as he sat at breakfast, with the name of Hawley Paget on it, and he was obliged to tell the servant to show him into the room. Hawley apologised for intruding on Mr. Threlfall at all, especially at so early an hour, but he was acquainted with some Threlfalls in England, and wished very much to know whether Mr. Threlfall was a member of the family.

"Very likely," replied Claude, affecting to be rather amused than interested in the question. "I have lots of uncles and cousins, I daresay, if I did but know them all."

Paget noticed the off-hand manner of Claude's reply, and thought that probably he might think his call a little too curious for good breeding. The smile was still on

Claude's face, and being a constrained one to carry off his dissembling as well as possible, Paget fancied that Mr. Threlfall was regarding his question as somewhat impertinent. It went sadly against the grain to feel that his question and call were thus entertained, so he at once took Mr. Threlfall into his confidence, and told him that he was engaged to a Miss Julia Threlfall, and that he had reasons for believing that she was playing him false, and carrying on a secret amour with another person. He added that he very much regretted accepting his present temporary appointment and quitting England without having had a word of explanation. If he did but know who a Mr. Maguire was, probably he should be disabused of a very painful suspicion."

"Oh ! I see ; a love affair, eh ?" said Claude. "Maguire, Maguire ! Now you mention that name, there is a family of Maguires in our connection, I know ; but

their relationship to my branch of the Threlfalls must be very distant. He's an artist, if I remember right."

"He is; no doubt he is a cousin of the Threlfalls I refer to. You will, I am sure, Mr. Threlfall, excuse this liberty, after the explanation I have given. You have really very much relieved my mind."

"I am glad to have been of this small service, Mr. Paget."

"Not a small service, I assure you. That you yourself are a member of the same family, I think I may venture to say I am sure, for you strongly resemble the young lady of whom I have spoken. She has an only brother of the name of Claude. Your christian name, I find, begins with C. Very singular if it should be Claude—pray pardon me this liberty. The Claude Threlfall I allude to is a young barrister, or rather studying for the Bar."

"A singular coincidence, certainly. My

name does happen to be Claude. I suppose the name of Claude is rather common in the Threlfall family."

"The coincidence is certainly very singular," returned Paget, "and you are so like Miss Julia Threlfall, of Walmer Grange. You really might pass for brother and sister." Thus, saying, with many more apologies, Hawley Paget politely took leave of Mr. Claude Threlfall.

CHAPTER XII.

MOREY MAGUIRE INTENDS TO GO IN AND WIN.

“ANOTHER packet of enclosures from Claude,” said Morey Maguire, as he took up a heavy letter with a foreign post-mark, and extra stamps, “and one, too, from Ryde.”

He opened the Ryde letter first. It was a very pressing invitation to him to come and spend the last week with his sister Margaret at Stratford Villa, and also contained a strip of paper on which Margaret had written a few words to urge him to accept it.

“I’ll go,” he continued, “it’s not a bit of use courting with pen and ink, and she will be sure to treat all my amorous effusions as a mere frolic. It’s been made too much of a joke, through Mary’s everlasting nonsense. Yes, I’ll go to Ryde. By Titian! nothing could have happened better, and I can deliver Claude’s letter in person. I’ll be off this morning.”

He opened Claude’s packet, and began to read the letter addressed to himself, which ran as follows :—

“DEAR MOREY,

“You have heard me speak of one Hawley Paget, a young barrister, who wants to make my acquaintance. He’s the son of an old friend of my uncle’s. I think I must have mentioned to you that he was in love with Julie. Well, as luck will have it, he’s out here in Florence in the capacity of an ‘own correspondent’ to some journal. We

met accidentally in a public room, and noticing my likeness to my sister, and hearing a fellow address me by my name, he made bold to call on me in my lodgings. I managed very well to disarm him of all suspicion that I was the Claude Threlfall he was so desirous to know, though I confessed that my name was Claude. Not bad that, was it? Well, he has cut Julie in dudgeon about something; what I don't know. But he has got hold of your name, and mixes you up with the matter which induced him to throw Julie over. He must have seen you and her at Walmer when he was staying at the Grange. However, he has cut her in a fit of jealousy. Polly has written me to say that Hawley has acted in a very strange way to Julie, and she is very glad that the affair is broken off with my sister. So am I, deucedly glad. He's not the fellow for Julie. I can see that at a glance. Polly also tells me that she is sure you like Julie, and quite sure that Julie likes you. If

this is a fact then all I have to say is, now is your time. Fill up the vacancy promptly. Bless you, my children! You have my sanction, Morey, and my hearty best wishes. Strike in at once and carry off your prize. She is a prize, I can tell you, and though to a fellow like you, with your noble superiority to base considerations, it may not be worth mentioning, yet I will remind you that she will have a good round sum one of these days. Do you like her, Morey? Then if so, you see Mary says you may have her for the asking.

“I’m jolly glad it’s broken off on my own account, for this Paget, if he should ever become my brother-in-law, or even renew the engagement with Julie, will know all about this Florence business, and will blab for certain. He’s one of those fellows who pride themselves on their strict probity. By Jove! he’d never think well of me afterwards for playing him false at my lodgings. I have never yet made his acquaintance, or, what is

the same thing, have never allowed him to make mine, and never shall, if you carry off Julie. So you see you'll get me out of a fix, and get into a very pleasant fix yourself, if you can make it all right with Julie.

“Of course Julie likes you ; every girl must like such a jolly good fellow as you, Morey. Go in and win. Don't lose a day. Post the enclosed to the girls and my uncle as soon as the packet comes to hand.

“Yours in fraternal bonds,

“CLAUDE THRELFALL.

“Morey Maguire, Esq.

“P.S.—Such a splendid Titian here in the Pitti Palace, Morey.”

“By Titian !” shouted Morey, as he laid down the letter, “I will go in and win. Post them ! nay, I'll carry them down myself. So this Hawley Paget was engaged to Julia ! To Julia ! What a fool that old Mrs. Davis was to tell me he was sweet on Mary. I see

it all now ! That's why Julie made a joke of my love-making. She was all the while engaged to this fellow. But he has cut her, and her pride will never let her forgive him, I swear. No, no girl of any spirit will stand cutting. Now's my chance ; I'll go in and win. I'll make love in earnest, and by Titian ! I think she'll have me."

Morey was in high spirits ; he hastened over his breakfast, packed his portmanteau, and was speedily on his way to Portsmouth for the island.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARY THRELFALL IS INCORRIGIBLE.

“MR. MAGUIRE is coming down here, Mary,” said Julia, one morning as she was putting on her hat for the morning promenade.

“Mr. Maguire!” exclaimed Mary, “how have you heard that? Has he written you to say so? Why do you call him Mr. Maguire, why don’t you call him Morey, as I do? But I am so glad; we do want a gentleman badly, and Morey is such a good fellow, and such capital company.”

“I have something to tell you, Polly, that will surprise you.”

“I guess, Julie; yes, I guess—let me guess. You have accepted him; it’s all settled, and he’s coming down to see you. That’s it, isn’t it? Oh! what will papa say to your marrying an artist? Won’t he be angry? Never mind; have him, Julie; he’s a dear good fellow is Morey, I’m half in love with him myself.”

“When you have ceased all that nonsense, Polly, I’ll tell you the news.”

“Isn’t that it?” and Mary looked quite disappointed.

“No, that is not it. Who do you think Miss Melville is, whom you admire so much, and think so clever?”

“Who? Why, Miss Melville. Who should she be?”

“Miss Maguire, sister of Morey Maguire.”

“Miss Maguire, Morey’s sister!”

“Yes, Melville is her theatrical name.”

“Why, Julie, how you do amaze me !”

“I thought it would surprise you. Well, Mrs. Bracegirdle has invited him to spend a week with them at Stratford Villa, and he is coming down at once, perhaps he'll be here to-day.”

“Oh ! that's delightful ! what fun we will have !”

“Now look here, Polly, I want you for once in a way to be serious. Of course, it will be no surprise to the Bracegirdles, when Margaret tells them, to find that we know Mr. Maguire too, since he has been at our house, and the guest of uncle. But you will have to bear in mind that he does not come to Ryde to see us, and that he will be the guest of Mrs. Bracegirdle.”

“Well, and why should we be serious about that, pray ?”

“Just because I want you to see that we must not intrude too much on the Bracegirdles and their guest, and whenever we

meet them you must not go on with your nonsense about Mr. Maguire and me."

"You don't mean to say that we are altogether to stand off now. I shall let them see that I know Morey well, of course I shall."

"Well, do as you please about that, but do not go on as you have done. You know what I mean."

"Oh ! surely we may have some fun, Julie !"

"As much fun as you like, but don't make me the subject of it."

"Of course not ; but I shall take for granted that Morey is in love with you."

"Pray do not, Polly ; I intreat you not to do anything of the kind. How do you know he is in love with me ? It will look so indelicate, and as if we wanted to catch him."

"So we do."

"No, we do not, Polly. You make me quite nervous about his coming down here, and half angry with you."

“Now, what prudish stuff this is, Julie. You know he likes you, and I know you like him.”

“You know nothing at all about the matter, Mary, and I must beg of you not to conduct yourself as if you thought you did. What will Fanny think of you and me, too?”

“Fanny Bracegirdle will fall in love with him herself. There’s no resisting, Morey.”

“Then let her.”

“Indeed, I shall do nothing of the kind. I shall give her plainly to understand that Morey is engaged to you.”

“Mary, you will drive me half mad. Mr. Maguire and I are nothing to each other, I tell you, but merely friends.”

“Julie, I’m not such a fool as to believe that; I see more than you think I do. If you don’t give Morey encouragement now that he has this fortunate chance of meeting you, he may give the thing up in despair, and take to Fanny instead. Fanny’s a pretty

girl, and Morey might go farther and fare worse."

"If Fanny likes him, she'll make him a good wife."

"Of course she'll like him, and will make him a good wife; and so do you like him, and will make him a much better wife. Fanny is not going to have Morey, there, that's settled, for I shall tell her all I know, and she'll behave herself as she ought to under the circumstances."

"Really, Mary, you do vex me very much. Do let Mr. Maguire and me alone."

"To be sure I will; you may be as much alone as you like. That's just what I want. I'll let you alone if you promise me that you won't let each other alone."

"You strangely forget Hawley, Mary."

"I should think you uncommonly strange and ridiculous, too, Julie, if you didn't forget him. Hasn't he cut you in a most cowardly, base way? If I had been jilted by a man,

I'd never mention his name again, or bestow the smallest fraction of a thought on him. Hasn't he forgotten you, and gone off in a tiff? There's a temper for you! If these are his tiffs, what must be his temper when really roused? Quiet as he looks, I believe he's a horrid temper. Think no more of him than he does of you, and then you'll think nothing about him at all. But, come, let us be off to the pier. Perhaps we shall meet Morey by the first boat. If he's coming to-day, he'll be down by an early train."

"Don't let us go on the pier this morning."

"Julie, Julie, what an actor you are. If I were to say now, don't let us go on the pier, because Morey will be sure to see us, you'd wonder what I meant by it, and would go alone if I refused to go with you."

"Polly, you really are too bad."

Both the young ladies from Mrs. Bracegirdle's were on the pier when they reached it, and as the Portsmouth boat was in sight,

Margaret said that she expected to find her brother on board.

“I understand, Mary, that you all know my brother very well. Mrs. Bracegirdle and Fanny were so surprised to hear it.”

“Oh! yes; we know Morey well enough,” replied Mary. “He has been a good deal at our house, and papa has taken quite a fancy to him. I shall be so glad to see him again, and so will you, Julie, I know.”

Julia was obliged to say something, and she said that she should be very glad, indeed, to see Mr. Morey Maguire again.

“Morey is such a handsome fellow, Fanny,” said Mary, addressing Miss Bracegirdle, in a frolicsome way; “and he is so clever, too, and so full of fun. But you mustn’t fall in love with him; now, mark that, for I can tell you, from my certain knowledge, that he’s engaged.”

Julia’s brow darkened terribly at Mary, as the latter cast a sly glance at her.

“Morey engaged !” exclaimed Margaret ;
“ I was not aware of it, Mary.”

“ Oh ! yes, he is ; he told me so himself. He’s quite engaged. You ask him when he’s alone ; he’ll confess it. I mustn’t tell you to whom, but I know who it is.”

“ It’s very strange he never told me,” returned Margaret.

“ You have been away from home you see,” replied Mary, “ and it’s quite a recent affair. He’ll tell you all about it, very likely, now he’s coming down, without your asking.”

Julia was intensely vexed with her cousin while this conversation was proceeding, and blushed very deeply. It happened that the steamer was just approaching the pier, and, to hide her vexation and blushes, she hurried forward to see the boat draw alongside. Morey was on board, and waved his hat to her, and she returned his salutation.

“ Do you see that ?” said Mary to Margaret and Fanny, as they went forward to the

side of the pier. “ Look at Julia waving her handkerchief to someone on board. Does that mean nothing? Can’t you guess, now, to whom Morey’s engaged? But mind, you mustn’t say anything to papa about it. He doesn’t know anything about it yet. Be sure you don’t appear to know anything about it when papa is present. There’s Morey, look! See how he’s shaking hands with Julie!” and they all hurried to join in the welcome.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOREY IS A GENERAL FAVOURITE AT RYDE.

MARGARET MAGUIRE very soon discovered that what Mary had said about Morey's engagement to Julia was quite true. At least she believed this to be the fact, for she saw by Morey's attentions to her that he was passionately in love with Julia, and neither she nor Fanny thought it at all strange, under the circumstances, that in their promenades they had very little of the company of Morey and Julia, who were either loitering far

behind, or gone in some other direction altogether. Fanny showed some signs of disappointment at this, but Margaret, no less than Mary, was delighted, for she had taken a great fancy to Julia, and the match was in every respect advantageous for her brother.

These promenades, in the morning especially, were very precious seasons to Morey, and he made the best use of the opportunities which they afforded him. Now that Mary no longer hung on their steps he could make as serious a matter of his love-making as he liked; and he did, on the second day, avow his real sentiments, and urged his suit so earnestly, that Julia, who in her heart really liked him, began to yield to his solicitations, and before the week expired they were betrothed to each other.

Morey was the happiest of men, and Julia, who could not help contrasting the ardour of her new lover with the almost icy coldness of Hawley, knew for the first time the sweets of

real courtship, and had nothing to complain of on the score of her lover's demonstrativeness. Morey threw his whole soul into everything which interested him, and now that he was in love and successful in his suit, he was as passionate a lover as any lady could desire, however immoderate her demands. Julia was not at all immoderate, for she had been schooled, in the matter of love, in the most rigid principles of courtship, and had learnt to restrain her own feelings, and not to be at all surprised or disappointed in the corresponding self-restraint on the part of her lover. Morey very soon brought about a revolution in Julia's maidenly consciousness and expectations, and he was delighted to find that she quite enjoyed the change, and would respond to him as demonstratively as he could reasonably expect. Morey was all that her heart could desire, and she was not ashamed now to confess that she loved him very dearly, and would have him whether her uncle approved

of it or not. He might disown her and leave her penniless, if he could be so prejudiced and cruel, but have Morey she would; no sacrifice was now too great to make for love like his.

Morey Maguire always had abundance of spirits, and could always make himself agreeable, especially in the society of ladies. His humour was never of that flimsy kind which indicates the consciousness that ladies are always to be entertained by something light and frivolous. He never condescended to this, for he held woman in very profound respect, and with some differences in his feelings, which no woman can reasonably find fault with or resent—for they were purely feelings of greater tenderness and courtesy,—he always treated them as possessing equal intelligence with himself, and as participating in the same lively interests of which he himself was conscious. He did not admire the impertinence which presumed to

entertain women with what, if addressed by a man to men, would be resented with contempt and scorn ; nor on the other hand was he able to understand or sympathise with the feelings of those men whose intercourse with women was as brusque as that with their own sex. He could not forget sex when he spoke with a woman, and it was not in the consciousness of his own superiority but solely in the gentler and more respectful sentiments with which her presence always inspired him.

Both Mrs. and Miss Bracegirdle were enchanted with him. His success with Julia was a source of such unutterable joy to him that the exuberance of his spirits was unbounded, and made him more lively and entertaining than ever. Mr. Threlfall considered him most agreeable company, and was always glad to receive him. Apparently quite forgetful of his own stern purpose, and of the danger he incurred, he gave Morey a general invitation to the Grange, and assured

him, in the most enthusiastic manner, that he could never come down to Walmer at an inconvenient time. Fanny Bracegirdle, at least Margaret fancied, seemed as if she had never forgotten Mary's playful admonition, for when in the excitement of conversation with Morey, or the animation kindled by his facetious humour, she yielded herself up to the pleasure of the moment, she would suddenly check herself as if the ghost of her old schoolmistress every now and then entered the room and gave her the prim admonitory look she so well remembered. Poor Fanny! Margaret was in the habit of going into her room the last thing just to say good night, and give her a kiss; and the last night that she did this before leaving Ryde, she thought Fanny's cheeks were slightly damp. But she and Fanny were going to part the next day.

CHAPTER XV.

DE LA MÊME FAMILLE.

OUR own correspondent in Florence was so much occupied with his political duties for several weeks, in consequence of the democratic ferment which at that time was disturbing the social foundations of that city and of Italy generally, that he had but very little leisure to think of his own private affairs, and as these affairs were in a very embarrassed condition, and he could not see how he could give an explanation of them without com-

promising his sense of personal honour, he was compelled to allow time to pass on, and decided that he would not write to Julia, but await his return to England, when he would see her personally and explain the motives by which he had been actuated in leaving her in the manner he had done.

Claude remained till the middle of October, when he began to think it was time for him to return home. He had worked hard, and the galleries of Florence had afforded him abundant facilities for studying some of the finest works of the great masters of the several schools of painting. Accordingly he wrote to Maguire to say that in a week's time at the latest they might expect him at Titian Villa.

He had heard both from Morey and his cousin Mary all the news about his friend's engagement to his sister Julia, and had written to say how delighted he was with the intelligence. All anxiety about Hawley Paget was now at an end, and he no longer dreaded

the chance of again falling in with him. He did meet him afterwards, and gave him a friendly nod of recognition, which induced Hawley to approach and extend his hand, as he said—

“The more I think on that matter of our conversation at your lodgings, Mr. Threlfall, the more confident I am that I have acted rashly. That gentleman, Mr. Maguire, is no doubt a cousin of the young lady, and the whole matter is satisfactorily accounted for.”

Claude saw that Hawley Paget was still indulging the hope of renewing his suit with his sister, an eventuality which he very much deprecated, and that what he had said to him about Maguire was the ground of his revived hope.

“I am glad of this accidental meeting,” he replied, “for I made a mistake when I told you that the Maguires are in our family connection. I now recollect that some of us had the acquaintance of persons of that name, but

they are not members of our family ; merely acquaintances, nothing more."

This information he saw at a glance was anything but agreeable to Paget, who showed unmistakable signs of being seriously disconcerted.

"No, they were only acquaintances," he continued, "I remember now very well ; just picked up casually in a professional way. The Maguires are an artist family, and known to my branch of the Threlfalls. I can hardly understand how the Threlfalls, of Kent, your personal friends, can have any personal knowledge of them. This Maguire you speak of was very likely on a sketching tour, and fell in with your friends accidentally."

This remark about the sketching tour revived so forcibly in Paget's mind what Mrs. Davis, of the Drum, had said about Maguire being an artist and spending his time in painting about Walmer, that he began to feel and look as miserable as Claude could wish.

“Are you quite confident,” he said, with a most pitiful look of disappointment, “that the Maguires are not connected with your family, Mr. Threlfall?”

“Perfectly sure; I remember now all about them. A mere professional acquaintanceship—nothing more, I assure you.”

“Thank you, sir, for this information; I must apologise for detaining you in this way.”

And he again extended his hand to take farewell, but evidently without any expression of thankfulness on his downcast countenance.

Claude saw no more of Hawley Paget in Florence, and shortly after returned to England.

So far everything had prospered with the hero of our story; the circuit scheme had been managed admirably, and Morey's engagement to Julia, which had come of it, had not been the least gratifying circumstance to

him and all interested in that event. On his arrival at Titian Villa he was received most cordially, and mutual congratulations were quite overwhelming. Margaret received him with warmer demonstrations of pleasure than she had ever permitted herself to indulge towards him, for she now felt that he was not only a friend, but about to be closely allied to her through the marriage of his sister with her brother. They were more than ever one family, and Margaret was as frank and intimate with him as with Morey.

Claude was determined to remain in town till the Christmas vacation. He had two reasons for this, one was that he had decided to begin a large painting for exhibition at the Royal Academy in the ensuing spring, and he wished also to continue his attendance at the classes of the Academy; the other was that Margaret was about to make her second appearance in a grand Shakspearian revival, and he wished to see her impersonation of the

character of Beatrice. He wrote therefore to his uncle to say that he had just got back in time for Michaelmas term, and that he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing them all at Walmer about the second week of December.

As Margaret was studying and rehearsing the character of Beatrice, he decided to select the subject of his first exhibition picture from the play of "Much Ado about Nothing," and fixed on the last scene of the last act. Margaret was a popular favourite on the stage, and he thought it would add to the interest of his picture if he painted Beatrice in her likeness. The thought suggested another, that he might as well make likenesses of all the principal characters. He himself would be Benedick, Julia should be Hero, Morey should figure as Claudio, his uncle should be Leonato, of course, for Beatrice and Hero were respectively the niece and daughter of the worthy Governor of Messina; and the Friar, who should be the Friar? Hawley Paget would

do very well for that reverend character. He thought he could paint his likeness very fairly from memory, for he had taken careful note of him asleep and awake. Yes, Paget should be the Friar. He read the play carefully, and postponed the commencement of his picture till he had seen it represented a few nights on the stage.

Margaret was pleased with Claude's idea, and he accompanied her for several successive nights to the theatre, and returned home with her after the performances.

The success of Margaret in this new character was even greater than she had achieved in the character of Ophelia, and she had the satisfaction of seeing her impersonation of the part of Beatrice commended in the most flattering terms in the public prints. After the first night of the representation, Claude began his picture, and Margaret sat several times to him.

When Margaret was leaving the theatre the

first night of the performance, Paul Brandon was standing with Claude inside the stage entrance, waiting to see her, and add to his congratulations. He resided at Wandsworth, and therefore at that late hour he took farewell of her outside the theatre, and saw that she and Claude got into a cab together to return home. This occurred the second and third nights. Claude and he were attending her on each occasion, but Brandon was always obliged to go away in a southerly direction, while she and Claude went off in a cab to St. John's Wood. He came on the fourth night, and betrayed some signs of annoyance at again encountering Claude, and asked why Morey did not also come to see his sister home. The only answer he got was that Morey preferred walking, and it saved the cab fare. He remained to see Margaret that evening, but he almost immediately bade her good-night, and did not say a word of the pleasure he felt at her continued success. For several succeed-

ing nights he did not appear at all, and Claude, who began to accept it as a nightly duty to go down to the theatre, was constantly in attendance on her to take her home.

A week elapsed before Paul Brandon again appeared at the stage door of the theatre after the performance; but he only looked in, and went away immediately. Claude happened to turn round at the moment of his departure, and saw his back only, but he was quite sure it was the back of Paul Brandon.

CHAPTER XVI.

CLAUDE AS BENEDICK IN "MUCH ADO ABOUT
NOTHING."

"BRANDON'S jealous! I'll swear he's jealous! What did he mean by keeping away so many nights, and then skulking off last night like a pick-pocket? Not a doubt of it; he's jealous."

Claude muttered this to himself as he sat at his easel on the following morning in the studio at Titian Villa, working away at his picture. Morey was at the Academy, and Margaret was in her own room.

“Yes, by Jove! he’s jealous!” he said again, putting down his brush, and retiring backward to look at his picture.

“Jealous!” exclaimed another voice. “Who’s jealous, Claude?”

Claude started to hear the word repeated in this interrogative form, as he turned round and confronted Margaret, who was then coming in for another sitting. He turned towards his picture to hide his momentary confusion, and as he resumed his brush, said—

“Why, Claudio, to be sure. Wasn’t he jealous of Hero?”

“But you are not painting the scene in the church, Claude. You surely won’t make him look jealous in the last scene which you are painting there.”

“Oh! no, certainly not; but I was thinking of the play. What a scene that is inside the church! I think, if I had been Benedick, I shouldn’t have waited for Beatrice to urge me to revenge such a dastardly act. ‘What!

bear her in hand until they come to take hands ; and then with public accusation,' &c., &c."

"You would have spoilt the play, Claude, by anticipating the last part of the scene with Beatrice. What a fix you would have placed me in !" returned Margaret, laughing.

"I am going to put you in a fix now. There, you see your attitude ; fall into it, and don't move, even if I should make so free as to kiss you. You do deserve a kiss, Margie, for giving me so many sittings."

"You certainly would forget your character, if you were to venture on such boldness. I see you intend yourself for Benedick, and he hardly dared, you know, to kiss Beatrice."

"But he wanted to kiss her, didn't he, and did kiss her hand ? There, grant me that freedom," he said, taking her hand and kissing, "it's no pledge of murder, mind. I am not going to kill Claudio."

"But Claudio would be jealous if he saw

you do this," replied Margaret, laughing, and withdrawing her hand.

"I take your meaning, Margie; between you and me, I think Claudio is jealous already."

"Paul jealous! what has he to be jealous about?" said Margaret, with a look of surprise.

"Well, I think so; I do indeed, Margie. You know he didn't come last Sunday; and he hasn't been for several nights to meet us at the theatre; but last night he was there."

"I didn't see him."

"But I did, just for half a second, and what I did see was very significant."

"What did you see?"

"His back, just his back: nothing more."

"I see nothing particularly significant about a man's back."

"Don't you? I do. Paul's back was the most expressive part of him last night. It told me that he had seen my back when he

came in at the stage door, and that was enough for him. He was off like a shot. When two men are back to back to each other they are more likely to be discreet than face to face."

"Paul jealous of you, Claude!"

"Not at all unlikely. I begin to be jealous of *him*."

Margaret laughed at the idea of Claude being jealous of Paul Brandon.

"You may laugh, Margie, but on my soul I do think I am jealous of him."

"You are jesting. Come, go on with that picture, for I must be off soon."

"That picture tells the truth, Margie, it does indeed."

"What do you mean?"

"Why that I really meant to hint something to you when I put myself in the *rôle* of Benedick."

"You cannot be serious, Claude; do go on with the picture."

“Will you take the hint, Margie?”

“No, of course not; how can I?”

“You mean you are engaged to Brandon?”

“Certainly, you know I am. Pray don’t talk in this way. You ought not to talk to me so, Claude.”

Margaret said this in a very kind tone, and evidently more with a feeling of pain than vexation.

“Margie, forgive me, I do love you, indeed I do, very dearly love you.”

“Oh! Claude!”

“How can I help loving you? Here we have lived together for months. The first day we met I was conscious of that indescribable feeling which told me that I should love you? I have loved you ever since, and now I am constrained to declare it.”

“Claude!” replied Margaret, seating herself, for such a declaration on the part of Claude was a shock to her, “you have made me so unhappy.”

“Say not so, Margie,” he replied, again taking her hand, “say rather that I have made you happy.”

“How can I say so, Claude?”

“You don’t dislike me, Margie?” he said, raising her hand to his lips, which she did not resist.

“Dislike you, Claude, no! I have learnt to feel towards you as though you were a second brother. Don’t disturb this feeling, I entreat you. Think of me as your sister. Indeed I love you as a sister. Let me be your sister.”

As Margaret spoke these words she raised her face to Claude’s. Tears were in her eyes, which looked with sisterly affection into his. He kissed her, and she kissed him in return.

“Oh! Claude, I could not suffer this; I could not allow you to kiss me, and kiss you myself, if I did not feel that we are brother and sister.”

“My own dear Margie, these kisses are the pledge of our mutual love.”

“Of a brother’s and sister’s love, Claude. I feel it as such.”

“It is precious as such, but I feel it is more. We are lovers, Margie. Say we are lovers, and make me as happy as Morey is with my sister Julie.”

At that moment a gentle knock was heard at the door, and Claude went to open it.

“If you please, sir,” said the servant, “is missus here? Mr. Brandon is downstairs, and would like to speak with her.”

“Brandon!” exclaimed Claude; but Margaret came immediately forward, and told the maid that she would be with him presently.

“Claude, dear Claude,” she said, turning round to him with a look of affectionate entreaty, “don’t come downstairs; don’t see Paul this morning, after this. Say you won’t see him. Let me speak with him alone.”

Claude again kissed her, and promised as she wished, and Margaret went alone, a little excited by this unusual visit of her lover.

CHAPTER XVII.

PAUL BRANDON MAKES SOMEWHAT OF A FOOL OF
HIMSELF.

THE moment Margaret entered the room where Brandon was awaiting her in a standing posture, she saw that something was wrong, and, after what Claude had just said about his conduct last evening, instinctively felt that this unusual hour of their meeting was not likely to be a pleasant one. She was herself, too, excited and flurried by her in-

terview with Claude, and was not at all at her ease. Both were conscious of embarrassment, as Paul extended only his hand, and did not offer to kiss her as he was always accustomed to do.

"You don't seem well, Paul," began Margaret; "won't you be seated?" at the same time taking a seat herself.

"Yes, I'm well—pretty well, at least."

"We haven't seen you lately. Why didn't you come on Sunday?"

"I had another engagement."

This was said with a tone of indifference which did not indicate any feeling of disappointment in the speaker. Margaret noticed this, and naturally affected a little similar indifference as she said, in reply—

"We expected you, Paul."

"You can hardly want company, Margaret, I should think on Sunday."

Brandon had always been used to address her as Margie, and this formal way of ad-

dressing her, together with what he had just said, a little nettled Margaret, but she affected not to notice at what he hinted.

“We but seldom see anyone else but yourself, Paul. Morey, Claude, and I, are nearly always alone.”

“Is Morey at home?” he asked.

“No; he’s at the Academy, as usual.”

Brandon made no inquiry about Claude, and seemed as though he had nothing more to say, for he was silent for a few seconds. At length he said—

“You have been well received in your new character.”

“Yes; I have abundant reason to be satisfied, both with my public reception and the criticisms of the press.”

“I have not been to the theatre for the last few nights.”

“No, I have observed that.”

“You have observed it,” he replied, repeating her words.

“Of course I have, Paul, and wondered that I had not seen you lately.”

“How could you wonder, Margaret?” he asked, with an offended air.

“How could I wonder, Paul,” echoed Margaret, “was it not natural that I should wonder?”

“That depends on circumstances,” he retorted, coolly.

“I don’t understand you, Paul; you speak as though you were offended.”

“And so I am offended; I think I have reason to be offended.”

“Offended! at what?”

“At the special attention which is paid you by Threlfall, and which you seem quite gratified to receive.”

“Is this the object of your visit this morning, Paul, to betray yourself as the subject of a causeless jealousy?”

This retort roused the temper of Brandon, who was very easily excited.

“Jealousy! do you taunt me with jealousy?”

“I don’t taunt you, but your own language shows that you are agitated by that base passion.”

“Base passion! By heaven! haven’t you given me cause to feel it? Night after night have I been at the stage door to receive you, and every time Threlfall has been there, and gone off with you.”

“Your home is in the opposite direction to mine, and miles away. Claude, too, lives with us. It is reasonable that he should see me home. How could I expect you to come all the way to St. John’s Wood, and then return to Wandsworth, at so late an hour?”

“Yes, Threlfall lives with you. I am quite aware he lives with you,” he said bitterly.

“And why should he not live with us? He is Morey’s intimate friend, and will soon be his brother-in-law.”

“And your intimate friend, too,” replied

Brandon, raising his voice with the increasing heat of his indignation.

“You have no right to say so, in the sense in which you use the word ‘intimate.’ We are intimate, for I regard him as another brother, which he soon will be.”

“Is that not intimacy, when a man comes down every night to see you home from the theatre?”

“Not the intimacy which you mean, and certainly not when the man is Claude Threlfall.”

Margaret had maintained her self-possession, as this colloquy proceeded, and replied to every observation of Brandon’s with increasing calmness and dignity.

“Paul,” she continued, “not giving him time for any further retort, “I am sure you are speaking under great excitement of feeling, and I forgive you the wrong you are doing me to cherish these unworthy suspicions.

But I am glad you have come this morning ; very glad. Let us be friends as we have been hitherto. You cannot see me home from the theatre, and I shall not decline Claude's escort any more than I should decline Morey's. You have no reason to be jealous of Claude."

As she uttered these words, she held out her hand to Brandon, who took it, but was much too ashamed of his part in this scene to do more. He still held Margaret's hand, but it seemed as if he had no power either to move or speak.

"Think no more of this, Paul," she added, "I shall think no more of it. We are the same friends we were, are we not, Paul?"

A warm pressure of the hand was his only answer, as he rose to go.

"Won't you kiss me, Paul?" she asked, as she looked into his face, which was now crimson, and comically coy with feelings of shame and self-reproach.

Brandon kissed her, and again 'pressed her

hand, as, with his head turned away, he moved towards the door.

“You will come next Sunday, Paul? Promise me you will come.”

He promised, and without adding another word, took his departure.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STUDIO AND STUDY.

CLAUDE did not see Margaret after her interview with Brandon, and, although he knew that he had gone, he would not disturb her, for he heard her close the door of her own private room which she called the study, and that room was as sacred to her as the studio was to himself and Morey.

Dinner was to be rather later that day for Morey's accommodation, so he worked at his picture, and at himself in particular in the

character of Benedick, as Margaret's sitting had been interrupted, and he was very anxious that her portrait should be painted in with especial care.

He was too much excited for some time after Margaret had left the room to go on with his work. What had just occurred seemed, for a time, almost like a dream, for he had no intention of making known his passion for Margaret that morning, but had been led on to the avowal by the happy accident of their conversation about Claudio. He looked at Claudio, which was only the shadow, or, rather, outline of that personage, with peculiar complacency, and thought him, for the moment, jealousy and all, a most interesting object in his picture. He would paint him with equal care, especially as Morey was to figure in that character.

It had been a most fortunate morning, he thought. Margaret was, indeed, a very dear girl, and the sensation of her kiss, so gentle

and confiding, still lingered on his lips. She would be his, he was quite sure, though she had kissed him only, and suffered him to kiss her only, as her brother. So confident was he of making a complete conquest of her affections that he was not in the least curious about her interview with Brandon. Brandon was only there occasionally, while he was every day and night under the same roof with her. And then, though she did say that she loved him as a brother, and would always think of, and love him as such, he was not her brother, and it was not in human nature that she, any more than he, should work herself into a state of feeling which had no vital reality and quickening force in nature itself. No, she would soon find out that her love was something very different from a fraternal feeling; her imaginary sisterly affection must of necessity glide into the passion which was only possible between them. Margaret had confessed that she loved him; that was enough;

he knew well what that love was, or what it must eventually be.

Margaret had shut herself in her study, because she never neglected a careful preparation for her evening impersonation; but the events of the morning were too disturbing to permit her to apply herself with her wonted attention to her part. Brandon's absurd jealousy, and his ridiculous betrayal of it, did not so much rivet her thoughts and excite her feelings as Claude's declaration of his passion for her. If she had been free, she told herself, that Claude could not have sued in vain. Love him she did, and she would not refuse to confess it to Paul himself, as she had already confessed it to Claude. But she was quite sure that the love she could not help indulging, was purely the love of a sister, and Claude must, under the circumstances, be satisfied with this; and Paul would exhibit a great weakness of character, and be as uncomplimentary to himself as unjust to her, to

cherish any feeling of jealousy. She was quite sure, on serious reflection, that Claude would see the impropriety of asking for any other kind of love, and that he was much too generous and noble to urge his suit, when he knew, as she would take care that he should know, that she loved Paul, and was even betrothed to him. Why could not dear Claude be as a brother to her even as she would be a sister to him? He would be, she was certain he would be; it would all end well after all, and once more she tried to forget that she was Margaret, and to assume the histrionic consciousness of Beatrice.

In the studio, later on in the morning towards the dinner hour, Claude's brush was laid down, and he threw himself into a chair.

"She says that she will be my sister and always love me as a sister. How can that be? No, that can never be. It is possible to cousin Mary, but not to Margaret. Mary and I have lived together from early child-

hood, and have grown up as brother and sister. She is my sister, can hardly feel any otherwise towards me than as a sister, and I love her as a brother. Yes, Mary and I are brother and sister, nothing more; it's not in nature that we should be more. I have never felt towards Mary as I do towards Margaret. I see this now, for never till now have I been conscious of the passion of love. I cannot marry my cousin Mary, and can hardly think that she can marry me. Oh! that is a most unnatural union; it never can, never must be! She, like me, must see and feel this. We have lived in a dream the last few years, and now I have awoke from it, and she will awake too. Perhaps she is awake to it already, and is thinking the matter over, and resolving to tell me that we must never know each other but as brother and sister.

“I wonder whether Morey knows that I have been fostering this foolish, this unnatural, feeling that Mary and I are betrothed to each

other? I have never hinted it to him. Has Julia ever breathed a word about it? Perhaps she has. She would certainly do so, they have been so much together. She could hardly fail to tell him all about me. Confound this thing! Morey must know that Mary and I are pledged to each other. He won't like this thing. Warm friend as he is, Morey is very honourable in the matter of love, he would not jilt a girl himself, and would be indignant with a fellow that did such a thing. Jilt a girl! I'm not going to jilt my cousin Mary. She and I are not real lovers—never have been. We shall soon discover that when we talk the matter over together. Jilt her! Morey can hardly taunt me with that. I will say nothing as yet to Morey about this thing. Margaret will be sure to say nothing about it to him. It is better that he should not know anything of the matter till it's all settled between Mary

and me. We shall soon come to a mutual understanding when I see her next month."

He had not risen from his chair, and was still revolving this matter with himself when Morey opened the door.

"Done up, old fellow," he said, "I see you're ready for dinner, and must want it by this time. Come along, let us go down stairs. By Titian! Claude," he exclaimed, walking up to the easel, "what a splendid picture you are making of that! Margaret's will be a fine likeness. Everybody who knows her will recognise it instantly! Have you been working at her this morning? No! you have not touched her since, have you? Been at yourself, I see. Really, that's clever, Claude! Benedick will be strikingly like you. You won't want me yet. I say, I've been thinking that Julie ought to sit to you. Couldn't it be managed somehow? I should like her to be painted in well. I fancy it may be managed

somehow ; but let us come down to dinner and talk the matter over with Margie. She may suggest some feasible plan. By-the-bye, I sha'n't be able to be at the theatre to-night. I suppose you'll go down as usual? Come along, you must be hungry, old fellow."

CHAPTER XIX.

TITIAN VILLA PREPARES TO RECEIVE COMPANY.

It was scarcely possible that Claude should meet Margaret at dinner this day without being conscious of a new and tenderer feeling towards her. But she met him with her usual cheerfulness, and without betraying any signs that she was animated by any other than her usual feelings. There was not the least shyness in her look, nor the smallest apparent difference in her conversation or general demeanour. She kept up a constant conversa-

tion with both Claude and her brother, asking of the one a variety of questions about painting, and the other about his morning occupations at the Academy. She spoke of Brandon just as she was used to speak of him; told Morey that he had been there that morning, but had only remained a very short time, and that he was coming to spend next Sunday with them; and in a playful way said that she hoped she might have the escort of Claude that evening, if he was not already weary of the play, and if he were she would be so much obliged to him if he would come down after the performance to see her home.

Claude insensibly fell into Margaret's mood, and, like her, seemed to be not in the least influenced by the exciting events of the morning.

"Margie," said her brother, "I was saying to Claude that as he is making portraits of his characters—and, by Titian! the portrait of you, Margie, is fine; couldn't be finer!—I

should like Julie to sit to him, too. Couldn't it be managed in some way? Can you think of any plan by which we may get Julie here for a few days."

"It isn't possible, Morey," struck in Claude at this suggestion; "you mustn't think of such a thing. Julie come here! Impossible! The old chap will scent something between you. He's not very keen-witted, but the proposal will startle him, and perhaps you'll not have the chances you have now of going down to see her at Walmer. No, no, you must give that plan up, indeed you must. I have portraits of Julie in my folio, and I'll make a speaking likeness of her, I promise you."

"Well, be it so," replied Morey, "but I wish she could have spent a few days with us here."

"I think Claude is right, Morey," said his sister. "Mr. Threlfall knows that you and I live together, and he will be a little apprehensive about Julie's coming here. You

know what you once told me about his giving you a pretty plain hint that he never would allow an artist to get into his family. If I were to ask him to allow Julie to come up to pay us a visit I believe he would decline it. But I have a plan that may perhaps succeed better. Mrs. and Fanny Bracegirdle have written me this very morning to say they are coming to town for a few days for the purpose of seeing the play, and I thought we might, by some little management, invite them here and make them comfortable. They will, I am sure, be pleased with the invitation and at once accept it. Can you and Claude sleep in one room for a few nights so that I may give them one of your bedrooms, or rather give them up my own and take one of yours myself?"

"Of course we can," replied both at once.

"Invite them by all means, Margie. You'll like to know the Bracegirdles, Claude; won't he, Margie?"

“ I think Claude will,” returned Margaret.
“ Fanny is a very nice girl, and a very pretty one, too, isn’t she, Morey ?”

“ Indeed she is. Write at once, Margie, and tell them to come as soon as they can. But what has that to do with your plan about Julie ?”

“ Why just this. I shall have no objection to write Mr. Threlfall then, to say that the Bracegirdles are going to be our guests, and they would like to meet Julie in town, and perhaps Julie herself would like to see the play, and therefore if she will favour us with a visit I shall be very glad to see her. I will also, of course, invite Mary, but, as Julie will have to share my bed, they must come one at a time.”

“ Capital idea !” shouted Morey. “ Nothing like a woman in council. I thought you’d manage it somehow, Margie.”

While this proposal was being made by Margaret, Claude sat silent and thoughtful.

He did not at all enjoy the idea that Julia was to be brought to Titian Villa just then, and as for his cousin Mary coming up and staying there for a few days, the thought was positively alarming. That Julie would make every effort to come he thought was absolutely certain, and that she would succeed in inducing her uncle to allow her to come, if not for the pleasure of meeting the Bracegirdles, at least to see Margaret in the part of Beatrice, he thought equally certain. What if the old chap himself took it into his head to come too! Nothing more likely. Come! of course he'll come to see Margaret's performance. Claude sat very uneasy as these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind. What objection could he offer to this plan of Margie's? None. It was quite feasible. Margie would be pleased, and Morey and Julie would be delighted. No, he would not oppose it; he might be misunderstood; at all events it would look strange that he should

raise any objection, and Morey would think it very unfriendly. So he appeared to quite approve the plan, and to enter into it with pleasure.

“ I think I can improve upon your suggestion, Margie,” he said ; “ invite Julie by all means, but make up your mind that uncle will come too. He’ll be sure to bring her to London himself, and will like to see the performance. You know he has taken a fancy to you and Morey, and therefore, whether he is invited or not, he will come and put up at his old hotel. Invite him, too.”

“ Impossible !” exclaimed Morey.

“ Yes, invite him, too ; it will clench the nail, and you may be quite sure of seeing Julie then. He will be pleased with the compliment, and it will cement your mutual friendship.”

“ I see all that, Claude, but you know, for your own sake, that it can’t be,” replied Morey.

“I’ve thought of that, old fellow, and see no difficulty in the matter. Wait a bit. You can’t leave Mary out, you know ; she’ll be in high dudgeon. You and I, Morey, will turn out. Of course I must turn out whether or not. Let us both turn out ; we can get a bed in the neighbourhood somewhere. Then, you see, uncle can sleep in my room, and as yours is larger Margie and Julie can sleep together there, and knock up a bed for Polly in the corner. We must put my picture out of the way somewhere, though, for if the governor should stray into the studio he will examine everything in the room, for with all his horror of artists, he is a great admirer of their works.”

“A better plan, still ; yes, that shall be it, Margie,” said Morey, with delight. “We’ll take good care of the picture, and everything else that suggests your residence here, Claude. We’ll turn the canvas to the wall.”

“By Jove ! no. The old chap will turn it

round, or peep behind, for certain. We must hide it somewhere. Can't we put it in Margie's bedroom? He won't go there while Mrs. and Miss Bracegirdle occupy that room, of course not."

Margaret thought the plan of Claude a great improvement on her own, and said that it could all be managed very well. Claude, of course, would be a constant visitor while they were in town, and would only sleep out of the house. Mr. Threlfall would be certain to be out a good deal, calling on his town friends, and then Claude could go on with the picture while Julie sat to him.

Claude made up his mind that he would not be too much at Titian Villa while Uncle Threlfall was in town, and he did not wish to be much in the company of his cousin Mary. He only wanted about an hour a day with his sister, and he would look in for that purpose when his uncle had started off to town. He flattered himself that with such a lot of women

in the house he might escape being a very special subject of conversation, and then two in a bedroom was company, but three was none.

“It won’t do for me to be seen much here, you know, Margie; I shall dine every day at Gray’s Inn. You’ll have plenty to provide for, and fill your table without me.”

Thus the matter was arranged, and Margie left the room to write her invitations.

CHAPTER XX.

“OUT OF THE MESS, BY JOVE!”

WHEN Claude thought over by himself the plan which he had suggested, and which it was decided should be carried out, he began to think that it needed some modification, more particularly in the matter of the picture. His cousin Mary would be sure to see it, and that would never do. What would she say, or, at least, think, when she saw who were the *dramatis personæ* on the canvas? Margaret as Beatrice, he himself Benedick, Julia, uncle,

Morey, and even Hawley Paget, all in the painting, and she nowhere—left out altogether! Couldn't he put her in? To be sure he could, there was room in the canvas. But was there another female character in the scene? No; yes there was, though she said nothing,—there was Ursula. He'd paint Mary as Ursula.

“Ursula! by Jove!” he exclaimed, “that won't do either. Ursula was nobody.” He would have to put her in the background. “She was a sort of tire-woman, lady in waiting—lady's maid as we should call her—lady's maid; too, to Beatrice, and Margaret's Beatrice and I'm Benedick! Here's a prettymess. Oh! that will never do! Mary mustn't see the picture, that's plain enough. But how am I to have sittings of Julia? I have it! I'll take her portrait in chalks, and transfer her afterwards. That will do! No it won't! Julia will naturally wonder why I want so many portraits of her. None of them at the Grange must know any-

thing of this picture. I'll manage Morey; tell him the thing's dangerous; mustn't be caught here painting. I'll get her photograph when she's in town. That will do with the drawings I have of her, and the aid of memory. A photograph! Not a bad idea. The governor is to be Leonato; I must have his likeness of course! I'll ask him for his photograph when he comes up. No I won't; I'll persuade him to be taken in a large size to present it to me to hang up in my chambers at Gray's Inn, *when* I take chambers there. He'll be gratified, take it as a compliment, think it a mark of dutiful affection in me, will be sure to have it done. Hawley, too; how about Hawley? Ah! Julie must have a portrait of 'Our own Correspondent,' not a doubt of that; every Pyramus gives his portrait to his own Thisbe. There'll be no difficulty about the reverend Friar after all. Out of the mess, by Jove! and got all my portraits to boot."

A gentle tap at the door of the studio roused him from his meditations. It was Margaret.

“Do you want me to sit this morning, Claude?” she asked, as she stood before him in her theatrical costume. “I have dressed the character for you if you want me.”

“Want you, my angel! of course I want you. Come in, and many thanks for coming in in character. I want more of your face, figure, drapery, all and every bit of you, and as much more besides—I want you altogether.”

“Well here I am, there’s nothing wanting of me; just as I shall present myself to-night on the stage.”

“I ought to be in character, too, to complete the scene.”

“Fancy you are; but don’t forget that you are Claude Threlfall, artist, and that you have to begin with your brushes without loss of time, or I must brush to save my own.”

“Fancy I am! By Jove! I will; and attend to work, too. There, take your attitude, and thank you for falling so admirably into it.”

As he said this he gave Margaret a kiss.

“You are forgetting that you are Benedick, Claude.”

“No I am not. As Benedick says, ‘Do you not love me?’”

“And as Beatrice answers, ‘No, no more than reason.’ Go on, Claude, I’m quite ready for you.”

“Do you mean with the painting or the play?”

“Either, or both.”

“Well, then, as Benedick says, ‘’Tis no such matter: then you do not love me?’”

“And as Beatrice replies, ‘No, truly, but in friendly recompense.’”

“‘Peace, I will stop your mouth!’” said Claude, at the same time kissing her. “There, that’s what Benedick says and does, doesn’t he?”

“ He does, but you have skipped something, and Beatrice says nothing in reply to such a method of stopping her mouth. Remember, I am really Beatrice, and I shall say nothing more ; but await your pleasure as Claude the artist.”

After this pleasantry the painting proceeded. Claude would have kept his Beatrice the whole morning, and Margaret was keen enough to see this. She sat till the latest possible moment ; and then, without giving him the least warning, left her posture, and was out of the room before he could stop her.

When she left that same evening for the theatre, she said—

“ Don’t come down to-night, Claude ; Paul has written to say that he will bring me home, and share Morey’s bed.”

Claude went to bed rather earlier that night, and only Morey waited up for his sister and Paul Brandon. On the following morning he met Brandon at breakfast. Each was civil

to the other, but nothing more ; and when Morey started very soon afterwards Claude accompanied him to the Academy.

Margaret was very glad that Claude had gone off with her brother, and commended his good taste and prudence in her own mind. She knew it was impossible that he and Paul could ever be friends after what she had heard and seen, and now that she knew herself to be the object of the passion of both, they were best apart, for they were both high-spirited and impulsive men, and Paul was very passionate, and when aroused, especially by one of his own sex in the character of a rival, might be even dangerous. She was fond of Brandon, for he was not only skilful in his profession, but manly and generous in his person and disposition. He was as tender and sympathetic as a child, but he had other characteristics of the child besides, for he was capricious, and prompt to take and resent offence. The worst feature in his character was jealousy,

and this she knew was very easily excited, and when once fairly roused overmastered him with the violence of its passion. He was very like an Italian of the Peninsula in this respect, and she very much dreaded what he might do when seriously provoked by one who crossed him in an affair of love. He could not avoid to speak of Claude to her this morning, but all she said was so frank, and so entirely in the pure simplicity of sisterly kindness and affection, that he seemed to be more satisfied and at ease.

“You must not think so much of Claude,” she said, “he never can, Paul, be more to me than he is, and that is a brother. As a brother I regard him, and shall ever be grateful for his brotherly attentions. You have no rival in my affections, and you must not make yourself and me unhappy by cherishing such a suspicion. I do wish you were not so sensitive on this point, Paul. You would be much happier and so should I, for then there

would not be a single feature in you that is not in my eyes beautifully fair, though you are as dark"—she said this with a loving smile—"as you decently can be to be a member of the European family. You jealous, stupid fellow, Paul, give me a kiss, for I must be off to my study now. Good-bye, and be sure you are with us on Sunday."

Brandon went up to his room preparatory to starting off for town, and passed the studio on his way back. He halted at the door, which was never closed to him when Morey was at home, and thought he should like to see what he had on hand. The moment he entered he stood in full view of Claude's picture, and saw at a glance the subject of it. He drew nearer, and was struck with the accuracy of Margaret's portrait. There he stood, rivetted with admiration, seeing and thinking of nothing but the object of his warmest affection, who was standing before him as he had seen her on the stage.

“It’s a masterly performance,” he said aloud, “and must be Claude’s. That fellow will be a great painter, and how rapidly he improves! This beats all I have ever seen him do.”

His eye now fell on the other more advanced figure—that of Benedick, and he instantly started as if he had been acutely stung.

“By heaven! He Benedick!”

And in an instant the brush was in his hand, which trembled with the violence of his passion, and he as quickly charged it with the nearest paint at hand. A knock at the door checked him. It was the maid who had come, at the critical moment, to say that her mistress would expect to see Mr. Brandon, if quite convenient, after the performance. The interruption was most fortunate, for both the message and the reply he had to give, afforded him time for reflection, and when the servant withdrew he returned to the painting with less excited feelings.

“No!” he said, “I’ll not deface it; and yet I could, by heaven! I could, blot out every feature of the presumptuous dog. And what if I did? He could paint it in again, and I should but expose my own—ha! my own what? yes, that’s the word—jealousy. And he would laugh at it, and Margaret—yes, Margaret—would perhaps weep. No, I’ll not touch it for Margaret’s sake. And yet, why not rub the cursed image out, and work in my own? Ha! why not? It would be a proper rebuke of his audacity. No, I must not do that either. He will laugh at the impotence of my revenge, and coolly restore his own face again. He will say Brandon was jealous, and defaced his picture; tell all the fellows at the Academy, and so will Morey; and worse than all, Margaret will say the same. She says my jealousy is my only dark spot, and she would love me more dearly if I were not so—jealous. D—— this jealousy! Yes, I am jealous, I know I am, and this fellow,

Threlfall, provokes it horribly within me. No one has ever stirred up this demon jealousy in my soul as Threlfall. But why should this picture move me so? Does not Margaret love me? Has she not assured me, over and over again, that she thinks only of Threlfall as a brother? I believe her! Yes, I must believe her. She is too transparent, too honest, too good, not to demand the fullest credit of the man who professes to love her as I do. But this Threlfall, whatever Margaret may think of him, has other than a brother's feelings for her. He loves her as I love her, would woo her, if he durst, as I do; would win her, if he could—ha! ha! if he could, if he could—as I shall. I believe Margaret with all the confidence of my soul, but I see before me a rival for all that. Claude Threlfall," he said, looking the portrait fiercely in the face, "you and I shall clash! You must not live here, or I live here too, and then there'll be—"

He did not say what there would be in that

event, but he threw the brush he had been holding all the time on the ground, and hurried away from the room and from the house.

CHAPTER XXI.

GETTING IT HOT.

WHEN Claude began that picture he felt that he was equal to all the artistic demands it would make on him. He did not slavishly copy any stage traditions or any novelty in its present representation in the series of grand Shakspearian revivals which were at that time attracting very largely the interest of play-goers.

He wished to see the play of "Much Ado About Nothing" put on the stage before he

began his work ; but the composition of his picture was quite original, and founded on his own conception of the text of the great dramatist. It was not, therefore, such a picture as would be offered the public in one of the illustrated journals, which is a mere photograph of the scene at the theatre ; it had an interest of its own as the individual interpretation of an artistic and critical mind, and it was being executed with a skill in the drawing and colouring which would challenge the criticism of high art.

But this picture, notwithstanding the enthusiastic interest which the painter himself had in it, began to play an important and not altogether pleasant part in the history of its author. The course of art, no more than the course of love, Claude began with this picture to find, ran smoothly. It had already given him some anxiety and threatened to place him in unpleasant predicaments, but he did not know, while he was working away, that morn-

ing, in the Academy, what perils it was encountering in the almost maddened rage of an interested spectator, and what thoughts and purposes it was awakening and confirming in that spectator's mind. He thought, as he turned over the subject of the photographs in his mind, and the temporary concealment to which he was about to consign the canvas in Mrs. Bracegirdle's bed-room, that all his difficulties were surmounted and his anxieties and troubles over. But fate would not have it so ; that picture was to be not an unmixed gratification to him, but was destined to give him some trouble to the end of the chapter.

And now the chapter of the picture opens with the accidental glance at it which at first excited Paul Brandon's admiration, and afterwards provoked him to curse and almost destroy in his subsequent amazement and wrath.

Sunday is come, and with it came Paul Brandon, not in the afternoon, according to his custom, but in the early morning to spend

a long day at Titian Villa. Sunday had always hitherto been a particularly enjoyable day to the inmates of Titian Villa, and to Claude especially, because all were at leisure, and Margaret could afford to give, what was always so agreeable to Claude, a larger measure of her society than on any other day. But here was Paul Brandon, before the family had risen from the breakfast table, come for the pleasure of taking Margaret off to hear his favourite preacher. Margaret never declined an opportunity of going to church, when the labours of the week had not made rest absolutely essential for her, and she could not decline this morning, when her lover had come all the way from Wandsworth to accompany her. The preacher, too, was a man whose fame was in all the churches for the extent of his erudition and the nervous eloquence of his oratory. It was to be an intellectual treat as well as a spiritual exercise, and as the church where the reverend orator

was to hold forth was some distance from the extremity of St. John's Wood, where Titian Villa was situate, it was necessary to start early, and, accordingly, Paul and Margaret were soon on their way thither.

"What say you, Claude, to our going, too?" said Morey.

"With all my heart!" was the prompt reply.

Accordingly, Morey and Claude followed Margaret and her lover, the latter of whom—at least, Claude fancied so—seemed to be the subject of other than exclusively church-going feelings, as he walked on with an air of proud triumph with Margaret leaning on his left arm, his right arm in perpetual motion with the whirling of his cane, which was varied in its movements by occasional sharp cuts, as if he were cutting at the tops of long grass or too obtrusive and aspiring weeds. But he was not in the fields this morning, and this nervous action of his walking stick was hardly in

keeping with the serenity of the church hours, and was attended with some slight inconvenience to persons who passed him on the way. He talked incessantly to Margaret, and in rather a loud tone of voice, and what he said must have been humourous, at all events to himself, for he indulged in a good deal of tittering, in which Margaret did not seem to participate. Claude observed all this vocal and muscular excitement, as he and Morey followed a short distance in the rear, and he thought it looked very much like an artificial excitement, and an affectation of unusually cheerful spirits.

At the church doors people were flocking in closely packed together, and eager for admission, and very soon the spacious sanctuary was filled by a vast, highly respectable, and expectant congregation. The two couples obtained seats in different pews, or rather on different benches, for the church was a modern structure, and was furnished with open seats

instead of high-backed family pews. As in the walk hither, so now seated for worship, Claude and Morey were behind Margaret and her lover.

The liturgy was concluded, and now the *pièce de résistance* was about to be catered for the vast assembly, as the preacher, a tall man, of powerful frame and commanding appearance, rose from his bending position to announce his text, which he selected from the parable of the Prodigal Son.

“And he was angry and would not go in.”

After a few prefatory remarks on the parable itself to point out the connection of the words just quoted, he announced for his subject “Envy; Envy,” he repeated, with a stentorian voice, and in deep hollow tones, “Envy, eldest born of Hell; Envy, proud fiend, accursed offspring of its horrid dam, Sin, fierce, scowling, restless, always malignant. And with Envy I couple Jealousy, which is closely allied to it, and may be called its twin

—twin sister shall I say? no, I will not speak of the gentle sex in this connection—twin brother. Jealousy, twin brother of Envy—Jealousy, morbidly fearful, darkly suspicious, damnably selfish, base, mean, cowering and cowardly, restless, plotting, savage, murderous, swarthy in feature, furtive in glance, nervously irritable, revengeful. Envy and Jealousy are my subjects this morning, dark contrasts to this bright, crisp, animating, glorious autumn morning. Envy, which cannot endure another's superiority or success; and Jealousy, which is impatient of whatever exalts others, and gives them advantages over ourselves—which cannot endure a rival."

Such an exordium, delivered by such a man, fell like a loud clap of thunder on the ears of some then present, and the words "jealousy," and "rival," produced such an effect on Paul Brandon, that he almost started, and moved restlessly in his seat, as if he were inconveniently crowded, as, like everyone

else in the church, he certainly was. The sermon was a most withering discourse, abounding in strong epithets, and containing not a few eloquent, but rather too florid and declamatory passages. And it seemed to have a wonderful effect, for the intensest stillness reigned, while the preacher, glowing with his subject, declaimed in most dramatic style, and when he paused at the end of a long period, the hearers seemed, like the preacher, to want to take breath, and a general movement and slight coughing and clearing of throats seemed to say that they shared in his exertions, and were intensely *en rapport* with him.

On the walk home, Brandon and Margaret lagged behind, and the others led the way, Claude and Morey talking and gesticulating in a very excited manner, the former every now and then waving his right arm as if he were repeating the glowing periods of the preacher.

“By Titian!” said Morey, as they took their seats [at table, “what a treat you have

given us this morning, Paul! So that man is your favourite preacher, eh? He is a preacher, by the great galaxy of the masters of our art! If I could hear that man every Sunday I'd no more miss church than I'd lose my dinner."

Brandon smiled, but it was with a sardonic expression of face, as he said that he was glad that Morey had been entertained, but he did not look as if he had been at all entertained himself, or thought it in the least a treat.

"Entertained!" exclaimed Claude, "I never was more entertained in my life. You know a good preacher, Brandon, and I admire your taste. Why, Margie, what a player that man would make, wouldn't he?"

"He's very dramatic, but a little too much of a ranter for my taste," replied Margaret.

"But there were some fine passages in the sermon, Margie; you must admit that. I have a tolerable verbal memory, and can repeat verbatim two or three of them. This one for example, about jealousy," and Claude was

going to favour them with a repetition of what would have been exceedingly disagreeable, no doubt, to Paul Brandon.

“Don’t repeat it, Claude,” said Margaret, interrupting him; “one sermon like that a day is quite enough, and we can hardly bear its repetition. Besides, I want my dinner, and so must all of us.”

Brandon was not at all at his ease during dinner, notwithstanding all Margaret’s ingenious and kind efforts to help him into that comfortable condition. Claude observed this, but appeared not to notice it, addressing himself chiefly to Morey on matters quite apart from the sermon, and in a merry mood, which contrasted very much with the mood of Brandon, and kept Morey in perpetual laughter.

“We were very nearly losing our dinner, to-day,” said Margaret, “and that would have spoilt your merriment, Claude.”

“Well, the sermon was unusually long,” he said, in reply.

“It had nothing to do with the sermon, but with the cat, my own favourite Tom.”

“The cat!” exclaimed all.

“Yes, I have been very angry with Tom this morning, though he is my favourite and such a beautiful creature, for he nearly robbed us of our dinner while we were at church. I didn’t expect we were going to dine on roast mutton when we left home this morning, but it was fortunate that we had this leg in the house, or we should have had no dinner at all.”

“No dinner at all! How so?” asked Morey.

“Well, I had arranged to have a dish of currie, you must know, for curried fowl, highly seasoned after the Indian manner, is a favourite dish of Paul’s, but Tom got into the pantry and so mauled the fowl that Eliza was obliged to cook the mutton.”

“Oh, oh!” said Morey, laughing. “Paul and Tom must have that out together, but as

we have had a very highly seasoned dish from the pulpit I dare say Paul will like the mutton quite as well."

Brandon smiled again his approval of this remark, and the smile was a little, just a shade less sardonic than before.

"That opens my eyes to a mystery," said Claude. "Tom, with all due respect to you, Margie, is a confoundedly prying rascal, and is evidently up to mischief just now. When I went into the studio the other day, I was surprised to find my brush rolling on the floor in a pretty mess, thickly charged with paint and dust. How he managed to get so much colour on it I can't tell, he must be an uncommonly clever as well as mischievous cat. It's fortunate I didn't see him at it, for by Jove! beautiful creature as he is, and your own darling pet, Margie, I do believe I should have strangled him on the spot, or pitched him out of the window."

“You wouldn’t have been so cruel, Claude, to poor Tom, I’m sure.”

“Well, not if I happened to think of you, and what you might say, you know, Margie; but when a fellow’s choler is up, there’s no knowing what he might have done.”

“That would have been a very severe revenge, Claude.”

“So it would; very likely I should have taken a milder course! Most certainly, the least thing I should have done to your favourite would have been to thrust the dirty brush in his sable face, and send him sneezing and whining to his mistress.”

Morey burst into loud laughter, and Margaret laughed too. Brandon laughed horribly, and his swarthy complexion was deeply tinged with crimson. He said nothing, but finished his glass of sherry to hide his confusion.

“I shall keep Tom out of your way, Claude,” said Margaret, “if you are so angry with him.”

“Oh! I won’t hurt him, Margie, for your sake. You wouldn’t like his sable face spoilt; and it was but a cat’s amusement after all. I forgive him! But he had better not do it again, for there’s no knowing what a fellow might do in a rage.”

“Well, I’m really sorry,” said Morey, “that Paul is disappointed of his favourite dish. Eliza, bring the currie powder; curried mutton is not bad for such as like their meat hot. There, sprinkle some of the currie over it, Paul.”

Brandon was so confused that he did as he was bidden, and enjoyed as highly seasoned a dinner as he could desire.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONFIDENCES.

PAUL BRANDON had spoken scarcely a word at dinner, and Margaret knew that the sermon of his favourite preacher had very much disconcerted him ; but of course she did not know that her accidental allusion to her favourite cat had had some share in disturbing her lover's mind, and making him so obviously uncomfortable. She knew that the presence of Claude was very distasteful to him, and that he would not care to remain taking wine

after she had left the table ; so she proposed that he should accompany her into another room, and leave Claude and Morey to enjoy their cigars.

“ Margie,” began Brandon, as they sat together in her private study for greater retirement, “ you have seen, I am sure, that I am not myself to-day. I confess that I have been greatly moved by what I have heard from the lips of that man who preached the sermon this morning. You, as well as I, must have felt, all the time of its delivery, that it was singularly appropriate and timely to me. I know, as you do, this great infirmity of my character, and cannot help thinking that southern blood flows in larger proportion in my veins than the cooler blood of this more temperate climate. I struggle against this passion, which is as hateful in my own eyes as in that of the preacher to-day. And you, my darling Margie, are a great help to me in the efforts I make, even though you are

necessarily the most active occasion of it. I know you grieve to see me so easily excited to its indulgence, and that you pity me, and dread its influence over me. I feel that I must speak of this matter to-day, and make a sort of clean breast—a confession of my weakness. You, I know, will sympathise with me, and will not think me maudlin in thus unburdening my heart to you.”

“Dear Paul, indeed I love to hear you speak with me in this way,” returned Margaret, taking his hand, and looking up affectionately into his face. “There is no unmanly weakness, nothing of maudlin sentiment, in what you have now uttered. If you and I cannot indulge in confidences of this kind, whose hearts are knit in love, and whose hands will soon be united in marriage, we are not fit to be lovers, and ought never to be man and wife. I know you struggle, dear Paul, against the worst enemy you have, which is, unfortunately, strengthened by the

natural warmth of your temperament. You often remind me of Othello—indeed, you do, dear Paul; I don't mean in the quickness of his jealous susceptibility only, but in the general qualities of his character, and, you know, Othello was a very noble man. If he could have talked with Desdemona as you are talking with me that contemptible handkerchief, even in the hands of an Iago, would never have wrought such mischief it did, would it?"

"I think not," replied Paul. "Now hear me, Margie, for though I hate confession to a priest, I feel that I can confess anything to such a priestess as you, and I have something more to confess which will explain what you must have observed in me at dinner."

He then told Margaret how he had strayed into the studio, and how the picture of Claude had roused the fires of his jealous feeling, and how the brush which, but for the interruption of Eliza, had certainly done its defacing work,

and that it was she, his own Margaret, who in his vivid realization of herself and her feelings, in a calmer moment, as she stood before him on the canvas, had slaked those fires and bidden him cast the brush from his hand.

“You are my tutelary divinity, Margie,” he said, with rapture, as he pressed her to him, and kissed her fervently; “the sight of you on the canvas saved me from an act of which I know I should have afterwards felt ashamed.”

“Paul, dear Paul, I love you more dearly than ever,” ejaculated Margaret.

“You are wonderfully painted there, Margie; Claude is a clever fellow, and will be a great painter.”

Margaret looked in Brandon’s face as he gave utterance to this admiring commendation of Claude’s skill with an intense fondness of expression, and with tears starting to her eyes.

Brandon observed this, and again kissed her tenderly.

“Why these tears, Margie love?”

“They are tears of joy, Paul. You can admire the man whom you once thought your rival in my affections. That he can never be. I am more yours than ever, dear Paul; you are no longer jealous.”

Brandon had intended that afternoon to speak with Margaret of Claude's picture, and express his sense of indignation that he should have presumed to paint in himself as Benedict. He had intended to make that picture his great witness that he was justified in regarding Claude as his rival. He had intended to have grounded on that picture an argument against the continued residence of Claude at Titian Villa, or at least, that he himself should reside with his affianced under her own and brother's roof as well as Claude. He had intended to have pressed most urgently the removal of Claude as the most maidenly and prudent course. But now he could say nothing of this, but only—

“I am thinking of removing from my father’s house into lodgings, Margie ; will you think me jealous if I take apartments in this neighbourhood ?”

“Oh, no ! Paul, I shall never think you are jealous any more. Do come and live near us. We shall see more of you, and then, you know, you can see me home every night—if the trouble won’t be too great—from the play.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

MOREY IS AFFECTIONATELY EXHORTED TO HELP
MARGIE IN A SMALL PRIVATE MATTER.

REPLIES had come, both from Ryde and Walmer, expressing the pleasure which all felt at Margaret's invitation, and the intention of everyone to accept it. The attraction of the play was irresistible to all at Walmer, and Julia was delighted at the prospect of again being with Morey, and Mary equally so in the anticipation of seeing Claude; and even Mr. Threlfall had his additional enjoyment in the

pleasure he promised himself of renewing Mr. Maguire's acquaintance, and also the acquaintance of someone else, whom he was informed he would meet. But this latter pleasure was an anticipatory enjoyment which he kept in the secrecy of his own bosom, and neither his daughter nor his niece was in the least aware that there was any little private matter which the father and uncle did not think proper to disclose.

In a week's time Titian Villa would be full of company, and Claude would have to lodge elsewhere for at least a fortnight. He was wishful to get on with his picture, which was on a large scale, and would keep him well occupied up to the time of the opening of the Academy Exhibition. And it was now the month of November, and although the season still continued bright, the days were shorter, and the fogs might be anticipated which would shorten them still more, and probably blot out not a few of them altogether. Margaret,

consequently, had to dress and sit to him every morning, and she was gratified to find that, though he still indulged his amorous moods towards her, he felt the preciousness of time, and applied himself chiefly to his artistic work. Claude's passion for Margaret grew in intensity, and he took every opportunity of disclosing it; but Margaret always met him with the feeling of sisterly familiarity and tenderness, so that he was not conscious of any repulse, but at the same time he made no progress with his suit. If Margaret had not really liked Claude it would have been impossible that matters should have remained in this state day after day, but her affection towards him was so unfeigned and demonstrative that he could not but be conscious of a certain feeling of satisfaction in his private intercourses with her, and indulged the most confident hope that this sisterly sentiment would ere long be transformed into the passion which he himself felt

and desired to kindle in her. Margaret's defence against her persistent suitor was as strong as it could be. She had given her heart to Paul, and from the first had received Claude as the intimate friend of her brother. He, indeed, had won upon her regards, and, through his sister, was soon perhaps to be in close family relations with her, she had therefore cherished the feelings of a sister towards him, and permitted him the friendship and intimacies of a brother. Margaret had good external defences, likewise, against any excess of importunity—in her professional occupations, and the necessity under which it laid her of being much alone when at home; and then she was absent every evening at the theatre till a late hour. Paul Brandon, too, had removed from Wandsworth and was now residing close by, so that Claude never could get the opportunity of seeing her home after the play. He chafed a good deal at this at first, and frequently

betrayed his annoyance and disappointment, but neither Margaret nor Paul appeared to be observant of this. Brandon carefully avoided giving him any offence by his bearing towards him, and seemed to be utterly unconscious that he had a rival in his person. Claude noticed this, and he was surprised at the further alteration in Brandon's feelings towards himself, in the apparent absence of everything like envy at his professional success. Indeed, Brandon would often speak as if he acknowledged the professional superiority of Claude in his presence, and would join Morey in his enthusiastic admiration of his friend's skill.

Claude did not think that this was affection in Brandon, nor was it. But genuine as he believed his encomiums to be, neither this, nor the general alteration in his conduct towards himself, gave him any secret pleasure, for he detected in it all a confidence of which Brandon was conscious in the security of his position in Margaret's affections. Claude

took a stronger dislike to Brandon than ever, and, sensible, or at least fearful that he was losing ground with Margaret, began to feel more keenly the stings of jealousy.

Morey and his sister were closeted together on the morning preceding the day on which the Bracegirdles, mother and daughter, were expected. They were coming a couple of days before Mr. and the Misses Threlfall had arranged to be at Titian Villa.

“ Claude doesn’t know the Bracegirdles,” said Margaret, “ I’m glad they are coming a day or two before the others. I think he’ll like Fanny, don’t you think so ? ”

“ Fanny Bracegirdle is a very sweet girl, Margie,” replied her brother.

“ She is. Between ourselves, Morey, I wish Claude would take a fancy to her.”

“ Claude is in such passionate love with his art, that I very much doubt if the tender passion of love could as yet be kindled in him. I never heard him speak on the subject in

reference to himself; though I fancy, Margie, he's half in love with you, and if you were not already disposed of he would bid for you before anybody else."

"He is to me, what you are, Morey—a brother."

"You may fancy so, and he may fancy so, too, but if you don't look out, you'll find yourselves both deceived."

"I wish he were engaged, Morey, to some nice girl. Fanny may take his fancy, and she will be sure to like him."

"Yes, I wish he were in love with somebody. I took quite a fancy to Fanny myself, and if I had never seen Julia I do believe I should have made a fool of myself with that girl. Fanny would be just the girl for Claude."

"Do you know, that's just what I think. You and Claude won't go to your lodgings till the day the Threlfalls come up, of course.

There's no necessity to turn out of your own room till then."

"Not so far as I am concerned, but Claude has made up his mind to be off to-morrow morning, as he doesn't wish the Bracegirdles to know that he is living here."

"Ah! of course. But he can be here a good deal for all that. I should like him to make Fanny's acquaintance."

"We can manage that very well, but he will not have much chance of seeing her."

"There's another little affair that I want to speak about. Mrs. Bracegirdle is a very agreeable woman, isn't she?"

"Very. A well-informed, and not a bad-looking woman either. You surely have not observed what I have noticed, Margie?"

"What have you noticed, Morey?" asked Margaret, smiling.

"You guess, I see."

"I think I do."

“Old Threlfall, eh?”

“I’m sure he means something, Morey.”

“And so am I sure of it. The old fellow is in love with her; by Titian! he is, Margie.”

“I told him in my letter that Mrs. and Miss Bracegirdle would be visiting us at the same time.”

“You did? Oh! you mischievous puss, you! That explains his prompt acceptance of the invitation. I never thought he would come; but that has done it, Margie. Do you think Mrs. Bracegirdle has observed his particular attentions to her?”

“Observed? of course she has; what woman, especially when turned fifty, wants anybody to interpret for her a gentleman’s special attentions?”

“And do you think the attentions are agreeable?”

“I’m quite certain of it. There is only one thing that would be more agreeable than

these suggestive attentions, and that is the expressed intention."

"By Titian! I'm delighted to hear you say so. I hope the old fellow will get head over ears in love with her."

"He's that already."

"What jolly fun! She'll put his head on the right way for him, and teach him to use his eyes and wits to some purpose. Won't she squeeze that stupid prejudice out of him in the ardour of her conjugal embraces. By St. Titian! it's the best thing that could have happened for Claude."

"Next to getting a good wife for himself, I think it is. Don't forget Fanny, Morey. I wish she might know that Claude is a painter, you could get her then to sit to him for her portrait. That would bring them nicely together, wouldn't it? I'll defy him to look often in her face, as he must do if he paints her, without falling in love with her. Think this over, Morey."

“ I will, Margie, but I see some difficulties in the way.”

“ Get the difficulties out of the way ; do, Morey, dear, if you can.”

“ I will, you may rely on it.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

FANNY BRACEGIRDLE SITS FOR HER PORTRAIT.

ON the very first day that Claude took up his residence with the Maguires the thought struck him that he might as well say nothing to his friend Morey about his cousin Mary, and as time went on he congratulated himself on his very prudent reticence. The susceptible heart of Claude had been smitten at first sight by the charms of the fascinating Margaret, and, although he soon discovered that he was second in the field, he intended to go

in for the race, and indulged some confidence that he would come out of it the winner.

Mary had told Morey in the frolic in the Copse that she was engaged, and as he knew that already, having been privately acquainted with the fact by that well-informed person, the landlady of the Drum, he thought no more about what did not particularly concern him, and he had not been curious to know who the favoured individual was, when he discovered that he had been misinformed, and that it was not she, but his own Julie, who was at that time engaged to Hawley Paget. Why this little secret did not ooze out in the confidences between the three young ladies during their frequent interviews at Ryde, or those between Morey and Julia, may be regarded as a rather singular circumstance, but for some reason or other, or by some fortunate accident, it never did transpire, and consequently Margaret and her brother knew nothing of the matter.

It was not possible that Morey, living under the same roof, should be blind to the sentiments with which Claude regarded his sister, and now that Margie had taken so much interest in so very delicate a matter as the state of Claude's heart, and had suggested something very like a plot between them to bring him and Fanny Bracegirdle together, he was confirmed in his suspicion that Claude was seriously intent on winning his sister's affections, and that probably he was causing her some anxiety and trouble. Satisfied that she did not encourage his suit, and that she wished to be helped out of a very embarrassing position, he resolved to do what he could to divert his friend's thoughts and feelings from his sister, and fasten them, if possible, on their interesting young guest.

Margie's suggestion about getting Claude to paint Fanny's portrait was very ingenious, but he could not see how it was practicable. In the first place Claude's time was wholly

occupied with his grand Shakspearean painting, and then before he could be induced to paint Fanny's portrait he must naturally have some interest in the young lady herself, which was the thing to be arrived at, and could not, therefore, be reasonably calculated on as the thing to begin with. And even if he could have overcome this little difficulty, there was yet another which seemed insuperable. Claude must not be known to be a painter, and to discover this fact to their visitors, and especially at such a time as the present, when Mr. Threlfall was expected at Titian Villa, and was likely to be on very intimate terms with Fanny's mamma, would be peculiarly risky, nay, positively dangerous. Why not paint Fanny's portrait himself, and make a present of it to Claude? Not a bad idea. The sight of her sweet face constantly in his room might excite some feeling of interest in her. Better still! Why not paint a pretty little Watteau picture, in which Claude and Fanny should both appear?

“By Titian!” he exclaimed, “I have it. Claude is painting a Shakspearean picture on a grand scale. I’ll do something of the same kind on a less ambitious scale. He has put me in his picture, why may I not put him in mine? Ah! why not? The subject now; what shall it be? Virgil, my English Virgil, will give me one in his *Bucolics*.” And he opened his translation of the Latin poet to find a pastoral scene. “This will do, by Titian! I thank thee, Virgil!—

“‘Thou, O Tityrus, reclining at ease in the shade, teach the woods to re-echo, beauteous Amaryllis.’

“Yes, this will do better than Perdita and Florizel. Claude shall be Tityrus, and Fanny the lovely country girl Amaryllis. A pretty Arcadian picture I’ll make of it, and genius of Watteau, be thou my inspiration! ‘Mopsis, cut your fresh nuptial torches; for thee a spouse is on the point of being brought home. Strew the nuts, bridegroom. Hesperus for thee forsakes Ceta. Begin with me, my pipe,

Maenalian strains !' Begin with me, my brush, connubial touches !"

This was resolved on, and the Bracegirdles had not been in the house more than a couple of hours when Morey, eager to set to work, requested Fanny to oblige him by sitting for her portrait. Margaret's face lighted up with infinite pleasure, though she was a little bewildered by the proposal, as Morey had said that he himself wished to be the painter. But Morey, no doubt, was doing the best thing to be done under the circumstances, and when she heard her brother say that he wanted to paint a pastoral scene suggested by Virgil, in which Fanny was to be the beauteous Amaryllis, she guessed at once that someone else would be in the picture besides this poetic lady, whoever she might happen to be. So Margie added her entreaties to Morey's, and Mrs. Bracegirdle thought it a very graceful compliment to her daughter, and Fanny herself felt quite a fluttering at her heart, and

blushed very deeply as she modestly consented to give Morey a few sittings.

Claude had gone to his own apartments, necessarily in the profoundest ignorance of the plot which his friend was devising against him, and consequently Morey had the studio entirely to himself. The very next morning Fanny accompanied the artist into his sanctum, and was requested to assume an attitude as if concealed by imaginary leafy trees from some one, and listening to melodious strains in honour of her own beauty. With many blushes she endeavoured to fulfil the wishes of the artist, and by his assistance was in the right artistic posture.

Her outline was soon on the canvas, and then she was liberated from her theatrical attitude, and invited to take a seat while the artist perused her face.

Poor Fanny ! how she did blush and flutter inwardly as she sat under the operation ! How kindly, even sweetly, did the artist look

in her face, as he told her all he knew about Amaryllis and a great deal more that Virgil has left us in the dark about. But Morey was a very inventive genius in more respects than one, and he was full of racy humour, and he wished to lighten up her features with her most animated maiden expression, that he might have all her charms in his picture.

It was very pleasant to Fanny to sit for her portrait to such an agreeable artist as Morey Maguire, and the hours in the studio were deliciously sensational to her. Amaryllis could not have looked more lovingly on Tityrus, and listened more wrapt to his melodious strains, than Fanny, whose expression was most enamoured, and her ear most eagerly attentive, as she gazed on Morey and drank in all his love talk about Arcadian swains. And when he told her that of course someone else was to be in the picture, or Virgil's idea would not be properly represented, and that as yet it was a secret who that someone was

to be, how could Fanny help her maiden blushes which would keep mantling her cheeks, and avoid to veil her bashful eyes with the long lashes of her eyelids, when he kept looking so penetratingly into them? After a few days Fanny was quite sure that she understood the meaning of all this, but how could she help it? She did like Morey Maguire very much, she always had liked him, but now she loved him—loved him very dearly. But Morey was engaged to Julia Threlfall, and Margaret had told her that Julia's uncle would be dreadfully angry if he knew it, and that he would never consent to his niece's union with him. Perhaps Mr. Threlfall had told Morey this since he had been in town, and he was beginning to think that he had better not persevere with a suit which could never issue in a marriage.

Poor Julia! she would feel it very much; and she would not come between Julia and Morey for the world, but if Morey loved her,

and very plainly he did, then how could she help it? Very likely Julia would have Hawley Paget after all. Margaret had told her a great deal about Mr. Paget, and it was very clear to her that he had just gone off in a huff about something, and would be sure to come home again and renew his attentions to her. Julia could not forget her first love, and it was not possible that, having been once engaged, she could give her heart so promptly and fully to another. Oh! it was all very clear now. Morey saw that he had not all Julia's heart, and that there would be a world of trouble with Mr. Threlfall, and he was now thinking of her. Julia wouldn't grieve about it when Mr. Paget came back. Grieve! certainly not; she would be full of gladness, and Morey and she would be very happy together. Dear Morey, she was quite sure, would not be false to Julia; but Julia could never be his, and therefore why shouldn't he be hers?

Morey Maguire had been quite satisfied

with the posture of Fanny when he was making his first sketch, and he was more than satisfied with the facial expression of his model, as she sat before him day after day.

“The very expression!” he would exclaim, with professional enthusiasm; “couldn’t be better! There, keep that expression; I like it immensely. Amaryllis all over. I shall be quite jealous of Tityrus, Fanny; I’ll make a pretty pair of you. This picture is to be yours, you know; and I shall ask the loan of it to make a copy for myself. You’ll lend it me, won’t you? for I have made a capital portrait of you.”

“Oh! of course,” replied Fanny; “I shall value the picture very much.”

“And so shall I, for the subject of it. I shall have it finished in a day or two, and ready for presentation.”

When Fanny was alone and anticipating her delight in receiving the painting, she was quite sure that she would be expected to in-

terpret it as a declaration of love on the part of the clever artist. “What a beautiful love letter !” she said to herself. “Of course dear Morey could not at present, not just yet, avow his passion, and therefore he has taken this delicate artistic course to breathe what it would be premature to utter. I quite understand him, and he shall see I do ; but I will do nothing that shall seem indelicate or lead any one to think I am in love with him. No, that would be very indelicate and very unkind to dear Julia. I will behave with as much delicacy as he, and wait, as he is waiting, for the opportunity, which will be sure to come, when we may avow our sentiments towards each other. Mr. Paget will be certain to come back, and Julia and he will make it up again. Dear Morey, I never met anyone I liked so much ; he is, too, so delicate, and so very clever.”

CHAPTER XXV.

GRACE DARLING.

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE had been a widow just fifteen months, and had divested herself of all the external evidences of her bitter grief exactly three months ago. She was just turned fifty, and would be generally considered quite her age, as there were conspicuous signs of grey intermingling somewhat too profusely in the abundance of what was once a jetty black mass of long and luxuriant hair. At the present time she was very matronly looking,

for her height, which was rather above the average height of women, was set off by a tendency to *embonpoint*. She was not what, in grosser language, might be called fat, but rather in plump, comfortable condition, active, stately in her mien, and still very good looking. She was very fond of dress and personal decorations, and, having abundant means to indulge her taste in these respects, she was always in the height of fashion, and wore what would be generally thought rather an excess of jewellery. Thoroughly enjoying life, and being a woman of some culture and, as we have already heard, of strong dramatic predilections, she had no idea of being put upon the shelf as yet, and never imagined the time when she would not merely be in such a retired position but also in the more offensive case of being actually shoved back there. If the inevitable course of events had made her the relict of someone, she quite expected that it would be also inevitable, in the natural

course of things, that she should become the possession of someone else. Women, she was used to say, were never intended to be alone, and if by accident they should happen to be left in such a solitary state, their wisdom and duty was to repair the accident with as much expedition as possible. A gap in a woman's existence was no more to be complacently endured than a gap in a viaduct or a railway arch, both must be repaired with the utmost dispatch.

Her late husband, Nauticus Bracegirdle, Esquire, of Ryde, had come of an old wealthy family of strong aquatic bias, which may account for the un-English Christian name which he owned through life. It was the pride of the Bracegirdles that every succeeding generation had kept their own yacht and used it freely. Mrs. Bracegirdle had no son, only one daughter, and therefore she could hardly keep a yacht herself, but she made up for it by sailing very frequently in such as she

could hire. But here was something very like a gap in the traditions of the Bracegirdle family, and the relict of Nauticus, simply for yachting reasons, would have thought it her duty to enter into another matrimonial engagement with a suitable gentleman whose taste lay in that direction.

Now it did so happen that Mr. Thomas Threlfall was a thorough Englishman in his predilection for the water, and every year he took Mary and Julia to the Isle of Wight, as much for the sake of the yachting there as for the change of air and scene, which could not be very much of a change to a gentleman who himself lived by the sea-side. At the very first glance at Mr. Threlfall, who was dressed in aquatic costume—dark blue, with a black-glazed sailor's hat, beneath which beamed a most affable and contented countenance—Mrs. Bracegirdle had said to herself “Such a man might aspire to succeed Nauticus ;” and

ever since she said that to herself she had done what she could to encourage and foster this aspiration that he might not be too much restrained by a reasonable timidity in the presence of so much attraction and natural dignity. Mr. Threlfall had felt the encouragement, and had been so bold, as time went on in the pleasant promenades at Ryde, as to place himself constantly at her right side ; and as Mrs. Bracegirdle always looked on that side of herself, and addressed herself more to that side than any other, gradually Mr. Threlfall began to feel that it was desirable he should be there as much as possible, and he never lost the opportunity of being there. He soon discovered Mrs. Bracegirdle's passion for yachting, and her admiration of the nautical costume for a man, and he became so eloquent on the pastime, and talked so much about yachts, that she intrusted him with the family tradition, and bewailed in almost heart-broken

accents the calamity which, for the first time in time immemorial, had put down the yacht among the natural family appurtenances.

Mr. Thomas Threlfall had inwardly vowed that, as far as in him lay, that great calamity should not be irretrievable, and had ventured to say, when the subject was resumed, and just before he left Ryde, that the yacht might again become a family institution, and that Mrs. Bracegirdle was the very last woman who ought to despair of such a thing. Mrs. Bracegirdle had smiled with a slight expression of bashfulness at this gallant remark, and when Mr. Threlfall embarked on board the Portsmouth steamer, in his boating costume, Mrs. Bracegirdle waved a white handkerchief alternately with the action of raising it to her face, and Mr. Threlfall waved his sailor's hat, and the reciprocal waving continued till both were lost to sight yet to memory dear.

After such experiences and parting at Ryde, the meeting at Titian Villa was a most

agreeable reunion between Mr. Threlfall and Mrs. Bracegirdle. It was not the yachting season, and in the month of November the name of a yacht would send a sensation of shivering through most persons ; but, nevertheless, yachting was again talked of, and the more it was talked of the warmer the sensations became, till at last on both sides the heat became oppressive, and each confessed to the other that the summer of their mutual life seemed to be setting in again.

“Mrs. Bracegirdle,” said Mr. Threlfall, one bright frosty morning, when they were taking a bracing walk together about St. John’s Wood, “how enjoyable a yacht would be to-day !”

“Most enjoyable, Mr. Threlfall,” returned that lady, “you speak as Nauticus would have spoken on such an inviting day, as this.”

“Permit me to do as Nauticus would have done, and be as Nauticus would have been to

you, if he were now by your side, dear Mrs. Bracegirdle," exclaimed Mr. Threlfall with rapture, at the same time gesticulating as if he contemplated some very fond expression of his excited feelings.

"My dear Mr. Threlfall," exclaimed Mrs. Bracegirdle, in alarm, "there are windows all around us."

"I wish we were in the yacht, I wish we were in the Copse, I wish we were indoors all by ourselves this moment."

"Mr. Threlfall, my dear sir, pray be less excited."

"Call me Thomas, Tom, dear Mrs. Bracegirdle, from this moment, and make me the happiest man alive."

"And call me Grace, Thomas, my Christian name is Grace, and my entire name Grace Darling Bracegirdle."

"My Darling Grace Threlfall from this blessed hour," replied Mr. Threlfall, trans-

posing the order of her names, in a passionate outburst of amorous humour.

There was great amazement at Titian Villa that day when, at dinner, Mrs. Bracegirdle called Mr. Threlfall Thomas, and he called her sometimes Grace, and at other times, my dear.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MIDNIGHT SURPRISE.

AFTER the arrival of his uncle at Titian Villa, Claude very rarely presented himself, that he might keep suspicion slumbering. He never once dined there, but always at Gray's Inn. He, however, soon heard of the extraordinary news of his uncle's contemplated marriage with Mrs. Bracegirdle through Morey, whom he met at the Royal Academy. The news amused him greatly, and he thought with Morey that it was a most fortunate event for

himself. He resolved to pay a formal visit of congratulation to his uncle without delay, and went early from his neighbouring lodging for that purpose.

To his surprise he found no one at home; all had started off immediately after breakfast to town for purposes of shopping or pleasure, so he went up to the studio and was tempted to bring out his picture and have two or three hours' work at it. He was beginning his arrangements for this hazardous employment, when he saw a brown paper parcel, containing apparently a picture, on the frame, and observed that it was addressed to Miss Bracegirdle, with the kind regards of Morey Maguire. Curiosity was too great to restrain his hand from undoing the string, and he could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw that Miss Bracegirdle and himself were the subject of it.

"What on earth," he exclaimed, "does Morey mean by this? Why has he painted

me in here? A compliment, no doubt, but what a fool Morey must be. Why, the girl will think I'm in love with her. By Jove! this must'n't be. Why these two people, in this lovely pastoral scene, are lovers. Confound that Morey; he'll make me ashamed to meet Fanny Bracegirdle again. She'll think I put him up to it, and sat for my portrait to him. What can have put such a notion into the fellow's head? By Jove! I know what I'll do."

He took the picture, painted out his own face, and, with the aid of a photograph and his own picture, inserted that of Morey in the person of Tityrus. The whole day was his own, and, though he would have been glad of more time, he painted in Morey's face with expedition and some degree of finish, dried it as thoroughly as he could, wrapt it up again carefully, and left it as he had found it. He was out of the house before any of them re-

turned, and chuckled over the trick he had played on the unsuspecting artist.

Claude had looked forward to his uncle's visit to London as involving some probable inconveniences to himself, but he had nothing to apprehend now that his uncle was fascinated by the dashing Mrs. Bracegirdle, who would be sure to engage all his attentions. Of course she never went out without his escort, and, as she was out a good deal each day, he was always very much occupied. Then every evening she was at the play, for she was never weary of "Much Ado about Nothing," and Margaret was such a charming Beatrice, and on these occasions Mr. Threlfall, most carefully got up, was always beside her in the stalls. On Sunday Claude met them all at Titian Villa, but his uncle seemed quite to overlook him as well as everybody else while his charming Grace was present; and, when the ladies retired and left the gentlemen to their

wine, he would hardly talk of anything else but yachting and the legitimate drama, about which he expatiated till he thoroughly tired out the rest of the company, and eventually fell fast asleep.

Fanny had received the picture, and had looked at it at first privately in her own bedroom. Yes, there he was, just as she had expected. Dear Morey had painted himself as Tityrus, and now her happiness was assured. She would lock the beautiful treasure up, for it would never do to let Julia see it; that would be very unkind, and make her very unhappy. Amaryllis and Tityrus were, therefore, carefully consigned to the privacy of her own travelling box, and the secret which that lovely picture had disclosed was as carefully concealed in the sacred penetralium of her own bosom.

Margaret and Morey were now watching every day for the results, but with all their observation they could detect nothing, either

in Fanny or Claude when he was present, that gave them the least encouragement to hope for the success of their stratagem. The picture *ruse* seemed quite to have failed. Fanny had told Morey how much she admired it, and what a precious treasure she considered it, but all her admiration seemed to him to be merely æsthetical, and that did not satisfy him.

“Shall you want to make a copy of it, Mr. Maguire,” she asked, “while we are in town?”

“Oh, no!” replied Morey; “if you will let me have it when you leave us that will do.”

Morey, in fact, did not care to make a copy of it at all, now that the scheme had failed; but Fanny thought that he did not care to occupy his time in the studio while she was in town. So the picture was not brought forth, to the mutual contentment of both.

Both Margaret and Morey thought that the real cause of the ill-success of their scheme

was the circumstance that Claude stayed so much away from Titian Villa, and that if he would be more frequently there just now something might come of it after all. But Claude persisted in his absence, for, besides his uncle's presence, the presence of his cousin Mary was a source of embarrassment to him, for how could he be much in her company without the secret of his engagement to her being discovered. Mary did not express any surprise that she saw so little of Claude, because she knew that Claude's anxiety was to avoid as much as possible all contact with her papa. She was disappointed, but she felt it her duty to bear the disappointment without murmuring.

The domestic arrangement at Titian Villa, while that small suburban residence was so full of company, obliged the three young ladies, as it has been remarked, to occupy one room.

Margaret and Julia slept together, and Mary had her own little extemporised bed in the

corner. Late as it was each night when they retired to rest, in consequence of Margaret's theatrical engagement, the three would lie awake talking about a variety of matters of interest. Necessarily, Mr. Threlfall's amorous advances towards Mrs. Bracegirdle and her acceptance of them, was talked about in these nocturnal conversations, and caused immense amusement to all three, who would lie laughing by the hour together. The laughing had ceased one night for about ten minutes, and all seemed to be sinking into their needed slumbers, when Margaret said, in a whisper—

“Mary, are you asleep?”

“Asleep, no! My sides won't be quiet with that laughter; they are all in a twitter still. How can I go to sleep?”

“Rub them with both of your hands, Polly,” said Julia, waking up again.

“I can't do that, I'm so ticklish. It would make them worse.”

“I say, Mary,” said Margaret, “how

curious it is that we are all getting in the matrimonial way, isn't it? I wonder what Fanny thinks of her mamma's intention to take a husband again."

"I daresay she thinks it's quite time she looked out for herself," was the reply.

"No doubt she does. I wonder she's not engaged. She's a nice girl, and very pretty, isn't she?"

"She is; I like her very much. She deserves a good husband, and will be sure to meet with one."

"Between ourselves, Mary, I think Claude might do worse."

"Claude!" shrieked Mary, "good gracious, don't speak of such a thing."

"Why not? He might do worse."

"But he's done much better."

"Done much better?" asked Margaret, rising up in her bed.

"Yes, he's appropriated already."

“Claude engaged!” almost shrieked Margaret, in her turn, “to whom?”

“Why to me to be sure. Didn’t you know that?”

“Indeed I never heard that.”

“Oh! yes, we’ve been engaged ever since we were in our earliest teens. Claude and I have long settled that matter. Pray don’t raise me up a rival in Fanny Bracegirdle, or I shall shoot her off hand, much as I love her.”

“You do surprise me, Mary.”

“Well, I thought you knew that. I made sure you would hear all about that from Claude himself, as he lives with you.”

“No, he never told either Morey or me.”

“That is strange. You surely have never hinted his name to Fanny as a desirable fellow to set her cap at?”

“Of course not, but I might have done so in my ignorance.”

“ Pray don’t talk of such a thing. Instead of keeping awake with laughing, I shall lie here crying my eyes out all night.”

“ Good night ! I suppose you have done laughing and there’s no need to cry yourself to sleep.”

END OF VOL. II.

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